Interview with The Honorable Amy Laura Bondurant , 2011

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR AMY LAURA BONDURANT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is November 3, 2005. This is an interview with Amy Laura Bondurant and I'm sure when you were a young child they used to say, "Amy Laura will you do this?"

BONDURANT: Exactly. Normally, I sign Amy L. Bondurant. When Amy Laura comes out, I can still hear my father saying when he wanted my immediate and undivided attention, "Amy Laura!" (Laughter).

Q: This is being done on behalf of the association of diplomatic studies and training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with can you tell me when and where you were born?

BONDURANT: When I was born?

Q: Yes, and where.

BONDURANT: April 20th, 1951 in Union City, Tennessee. Obion County is in the northwestern corner of Tennessee.

Q: April 20, by the way, is Hitler's birthday.

BONDURANT: I know, and Charlie Chaplin's is within a few days.

Q: And Charlie Chaplin's.

BONDURANT: How do you know this?

Q: I didn't know Charlie Chaplin's but I knew Hitler's birthday because I was in Germany and I noticed and I was dealing with Germans who wanted visas. This was in the 50s and we were looking at who was a member of the Nazi party. I saw an inordinate number of people who joined the Nazi party in April 20th 1944. As you know, the war was just about over at that point and that wasn't a good time to join the Nazi party and I found out that the local block fuehrers in Germany signed up a lot of people, just put them on the list to show Hitler that he had the support of the people. It had nothing to do with— we learned to dismiss the late comers. What was the name of the town in which you were born?

BONDURANT: I was born in the town of Union City, Tennessee. That's where my mother's family lived. I actually lived in Hickman, Kentucky, a scenic Mark Twain town on the Mississippi River which is a few miles away in far southwestern Kentucky. The hospital is in Tennessee.

Q: What was your father's name? Bondurant?

BONDURANT: Yes.

Q: Where does that come from?

BONDURANT: It's a French Huguenot name. Jean Pierre Bondurant came to Virginia in 1700 from Genholac, a little village in the Cevennes, to escape religious persecution in France. Jean Pierre is the progenitor of all the Bondurants of America. Interestingly, the Bondurant family of America was invited to Genholac in 1993. My husband, young son,

and I were in the south of France vacationing and we went to this gathering and it was fascinating. I was invited back in my third year as OECD ambassador for a ceremony in Genholac where I spoke and the town fathers took us on a tour of the village. It was fun and fascinating to see.

Some of the French Bondurant family that remained in the area gave me the Bondurant family tree that goes back to 1400. For our branch of the family, the tree stops when Jean Pierre left the immediate area in the very late 1600s and the French family had no idea what happened to him until they met the returning Bondurants from America. The French family has now filled in the tree with the information the Bondurant family of America provided them about the succeeding 12 generations in America.

The Bondurant family of America is also descended from French and English monarchs and my family is descended from signers of the Magna Carta. This history has probably given me a sense of perspective on the importance of governance.

Q: Can you backtrack a bit? On that side of the family what were they doing? How did they get to Tennessee and Kentucky?

BONDURANT: When Jean Pierre came to Virginia on a ship filled with these religious refugees, he and the other Huguenots were given land by the English, and, in turn this land would serve as a buffer zone between the English settlements and the American Indians. Jean Pierre was a doctor and an apothecary.

Three generations later, Benjamin Bondurant left Virginia and came to the community of Dresden, Tennessee. He was the first lawyer at bar there, and established the first courthouse in his home. His grandson, John J. Crittenden Bondurant, was in the Confederate army in General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry. I believe that he fought a battle in Union City, Tennessee. He then happened to go over to the nearby town of Hickman Kentucky (at that time one of the larger towns on that part of the Mississippi

River) and decided to stay there. That was my great grandfather. He became a successful banker and landowner and my Bondurant family has been there since.

Q: Did your family have Confederate memories? I ask because you were up in that border region and your family could have been on one side or the other.

BONDURANT: That's correct. My mother tells a story about her great grandfather Tucker who fought at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee and saw his brother who was wounded. He went to his brother and he helped him to sit with his back against a tree. My great, great grandfather pulled the cap down in front of his brother's eyes so that his face was shaded from the sun. The commander said, “We've got to move on.” He moved on and he never saw his brother again.

Q: What did your grandfather do?

BONDURANT: My father's father was a landowner and agriculturist and my father also farmed, was a lawyer and a judge for many years. He liked to be creative in his home workshop and received 3 patents for his energy efficiency inventions. He is 88 years old, and still lives in the town of Hickman, Kentucky with my mother.

Q: Did your grandfather go to college or university? I will do the father's side first and then we'll do the mother's side.

BONDURANT: There was an emphasis on the importance of education in his family even though, in the early days, they were living on the frontier. For example, my great, great, great grandfather, Benjamin Bondurant, studied to be a lawyer, I believe, in Virginia before moving to Dresden, Tennessee where he practiced. My grandfather did not. My father was a lawyer who graduated from the University of Kentucky College of Law. His two sisters graduated from Kentucky colleges and were teachers. They were both musicians as well.

Q: Let's talk about your mother's side. What was her family and where did they come from?

BONDURANT: They are from western Tennessee. I adored my grandfather, Hoyt Bell and my grandmother, Flora Amy Ragsdale, for whom I was named. My grandmother was a teacher for a number of years who attended a college in the Memphis, Tennessee area. My grandfather was a businessman and a farmer. He was a very independent man, raised by his Caldwell grandparents after his mother died when he was twelve. He told me stories of his boyhood, including sneaking away from home to spy on a meeting of the Night Riders of Tennessee, a notorious racist group whose members kept secret identities. His grandparents would have been horrified to know that he had done that. He walked with a cane because of a bad fall from the back of a wild horse that he had been forbidden to ride.

My mother, a home economics major in college, taught school for several years before she married. She was a high school basketball star on a team that is still occasionally referred to for its success. She had been chosen as a campus beauty at the University of Tennessee. She taught me science in high school, as the superintendent asked her to fill in for a year for a teacher who had to take a prolonged leave of absence. As a science teacher, she was, as in most things in her life, perfect in her approach.

Q: That was traditional to teach and then get a “Mrs. Degree.”

BONDURANT: I guess my grandmother, my dad's sisters, and my mother did that.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

BONDURANT: They met on the street in the town of Union City, Tennessee where my mother and her parents were living. It was close to the area in Kentucky where my dad

lived with his parents. They were with friends who knew each other and who introduced them. This was right after the war.

Q: World War II.

BONDURANT: Right after World War II. My mother was teaching. My father did not fight in the war because his father was a farmer and had broken his leg and the army sent my father home to take over the farm. Agriculture was so important.

Q: That was done all the time. Keep the farms going. You grew up in, what was the name of the town?

BONDURANT: Hickman, Kentucky.

Q: Hickman, Kentucky. What was Hickman, Kentucky like when you grew up?

BONDURANT: It was very idyllic. As children, we rode our bikes and played softball in the neighborhood. My mother's father, Hoyt Bell, taught me one of my life lessons on the softball field. He watched me strike out many times after taking big swings at the ball when I was just about six. “Amy Laura,” he said, “Are you trying to hit a home run?” “Of course, Papa, what else would anyone do?” “Amy, try to hit to get to first base the next time you go to bat.” I took that to heart. And the next time at bat, I did hit to get to first base rather than to swing for a home run. I did make it to first base that time and many more. Eventually, I became a home run hitter on the neighborhood lot and later when I played in high school. However, if I ever tried to hit a home run, I struck out. If I tried simply to hit the ball to get to first base, I sometimes hit a home run. I often think about this when I feel overwhelmed by an ambitious broad based project. It is then that I take a deep breath and try to focus on reaching a short term goal, an initial step in the overall project. Things generally work out well for me with that approach.

We also spent time on my dad's family farm outside the town where we lived. We grew up riding horses and playing hide and seek in the huge, wooden barn among the hay stacks. My dad and his friends took me along duck hunting usually once a year and sometimes also for quail hunts on the farm. We would sit in a duck blind in the early morning overlooking the Mississippi River, watch the sun rise, and see the beauty of nature.

When I was a child in Hickman, we went out on the river on my dad's boat, a pretty mahogany speed boat. I learned to water ski when I was six years old.

Q: On the Mississippi River. Good Heavens!

BONDURANT: I recall someone yelling that first day when I stood up on the skis, and I think this was in jest, “Don't fall, there's a boat with a barge coming!”

Q: That's not a passive little river.

BONDURANT: In my teenage years, we would take our boat and go out to the islands and have parties. It was lovely; it was wonderful. It was a very free existence.

Q: Were Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer a part of your of your life?

BONDURANT: Of course. Absolutely.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

BONDURANT: Yes, very much so. When I was in second grade I read Gone with the Wind and then proceeded to have nightmares about it. I would sleep walk and talk about it. My mother was very worried that she had allowed me to read that at such a young age. I read a book a day in third grade. Yes, I read my way through childhood.

Just as an aside, I recently told my friend, the remarkable Olivia de Havilland, the story about my childhood encounter with the book on which the film was based in which she starred. Olivia, now 89, became a dear friend in Paris during our Ambassadorial days there and she was a frequent guest at our residence for social events. She is incredibly charming and witty and we love to hear her stories about her Hollywood days. I recall at my 50th birthday party, given by my husband at the Ambassadorial residence, she advised, “Tell them you are 10 years older, my dear, and they will be all the more impressed.” Then she related that she was quoting another famous actress who actually employed this method.

Q: Were you a Nancy Drew person?

BONDURANT: My older sister and I both read all the Nancy Drew books. They were given to us by an elderly lady who lived next door.

Q: I haven't yet met a Foreign Service woman who hasn't read Nancy Drew.

BONDURANT: Isn't that interesting?

Q: This is a glimpse of an independent young woman and it stuck with me. It's an interesting thing.

BONDURANT: I have two sisters, one three years older and one three years younger. They stayed in the area. My parents live in a large old home that my dad says his mother's Burrus ancestor built there about the time the town was founded in the mid-1800s. My older sister, Ann, with both business and nursing degrees, raised her daughter, Dr. Melanie Smith, now an eye surgeon, in that home with my parents. She currently lives in Arkansas, near her daughter's growing and dynamic family. My younger sister and her husband, Lucy and Max Wilson, are in agriculture. They were high school friends and graduated from high school and college together. She has a very busy schedule, assisting

her husband on the farm. They have an impressive son, John Max, who excels in the sciences.

Q: This is where we'll get to it. Where did your family fall politically? Or did they?

BONDURANT: My father and mother are Democrats. We offspring are split now. My dad was a politician, an elected official. He served as mayor and then judge for 35 years, interspersed with years in private legal practice. He always asked me to campaign with him, which I did — sometimes willingly, sometimes unwillingly.

Q: It's a great experience.

BONDURANT: Well, you know, I can walk into a room full of people whom I don't know and be comfortable. My husband is always amazed at that. I do not always know what to say right away, but I'm comfortable. That is a direct result of those experiences campaigning with him.

Q: Among other things it's a skill. Where did your part of Kentucky fall politically?

BONDURANT: When I was growing up, far western Kentucky was predominantly a conservative or Yellow Dog Democratic area. Now there are many more Republicans. When I was young, there were few Republicans, even in offices elected state wide. My now deceased friend Ambassador and former Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) was one of the few and we admired him and liked him very much in my family. In fact, years later in Washington, I worked with him successfully on a piece of legislation for then Senator Wendell Ford (D-KY) that was unfinished business from Senator Cooper's days. The stories Senator Cooper told me at that time about his experiences as an ambassador inspired me to want to do that, although he once told me that his favorite job was being a circuit judge based in Somerset, Kentucky. That was the job that my father enjoyed the most.

Q: I read a book about someone working with John Sherman Cooper in East Germany. How about school? What type of school did you have there?

BONDURANT: I went to a public high school, Fulton County High School, and to the Hickman public grade school. I went to the University of Kentucky and started at the University of Kentucky Law School. I later finished law school here in Washington at Washington College of Law at the American University while I worked on Capitol Hill.

Q: Let's talk about grade school.

BONDURANT: It wasn't that stimulating because my attention wasn't focused. In later years I was diagnosed with border line attention deficit disorder. Though I was the valedictorian when I graduated from high school, I felt like I had not applied myself enough and had not learned as much as I would have liked. What was stimulating and what I miss in my life now were the mix of people, all classes of wonderful people.

My child and my husband too have had a more elite primary and high school education in private schools. But I think one negative of their otherwise excellent educations is that they didn't get this big broad slice of life experience from having attended public school with more exposure to people from all walks of life.

When I was in grade school, my parents were approached by people to send me to a private school in Memphis, as the thought was that this would provide more challenge. My father responded, “Public education is what I want her to have, because she will not get the education she needs to prepare her for life in those schools. She needs to be with this mix of people.” His views remain very true to that perspective.

Q: What was the town like and from where did it draw its people?

BONDURANT: It was a town surrounded by cotton plantations when I was young. There was a pretty large African-American population and people of European extract whose

families had been there for many generations and had settled there around the same time as my ancestors or in the early 1800s. So it was that mix. In that sense, its makeup reflected the economics of those days of the Old South.

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: The dynamic was changing as I was growing up. We previously had many Mexican migrant workers come through the town. Agriculture began to change as soybeans became more prevalent and cotton was grown much less for economic reasons. Now the area is very dependent on the river for moving grain, soybeans, wheat, and recently, during the period of fascination with biofuels, more corn. That is really the main source for the local economy. A high percentage of people from my high school no longer live there as they left to seek jobs elsewhere. When I go home, many of my childhood friends are not there.

Q: I take it, being in western Kentucky that you didn't have an Appalachian strain there particularly —

BONDURANT: Not at all.

Q: You know, mountain people —

BONDURANT: Not at all.

Q: They're quite a different breed apart.

BONDURANT: Western Kentucky is more Midwestern and southern, though, as in Appalachia, many people are of European extract.

Q: How had Brown vs. the Board of Education, it had already taken place?

BONDURANT: In 1954, yes. I was 3 years old then.

Q: 54. So that, did that, how did that —

BONDURANT: I remember that I grew up with a real notion of the importance of equality. Where did I get that? I don't know. I guess from my parents who were both always very fair minded people. I remember that my mother was popular as a teacher with my African-American high school friends. I remember being in a segregated elementary school and then having an integrated high school. So that happened while I was growing up. But it took a number of years after the Brown decision. I felt integration was the right course to take and I supported it as did my family.

Q: Was there much resistance to the true call because you had been there right when they would have been.

BONDURANT: I don't remember resistance in the local community but my mother says she remembers some discontent. My dear friend, former Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner Linda Breathitt grew up closer to the action in Kentucky. Her father, who early on helped me in my career and who I admired very much, Edward Breathitt, had been Governor of Kentucky in the early 60s. His heroic failed effort for desegregation legislation led to Martin Luther King marching in Lexington. Then Governor Breathitt's effort paid off with passage of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act in 1966. He was the first southern Governor to pass such a law and also the youngest Southern Governor at the time. He also pushed for and helped recruit the first black football player at the University of Kentucky.

My husband really grew up in the middle of the controversy. He is from an old Montgomery, Alabama family and his father, Dr. David Dunn, Jr. was the first OB-GYN in Montgomery. In the same year, Dr. Dunn delivered babies for both Martin Luther King, Jr. and George Wallace, the segregationist Alabama governor who ran for president four times and was paralyzed by an assassination attempt in 1972.

The Dunn family stories about the period are inspiring. Dr. Dunn, for example, went to the grounds of the hospital that he owned in Montgomery to turn on water so that the larger number of marchers resting on the hospital grounds could drink, after participating in the famous Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March. David's mother, Elizabeth, was one of the white women who went to the Dexter Avenue Baptist church in Montgomery to listen to Reverend King preach.

A movie was mad“The Long Walk Home” — which involves their family and my husband as a child. It has to do with the Rosa Parks period and the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56, when the local African-American community stayed off the bus lines in protest against being forced to sit in the back of the buses. The maid who worked for my husband's family and another family across the street helped organize African-American taxi drivers to drive the maids to the homes of their white employers so the maids could participate in the boycott.

The Dunn family also lived next door to the fearless Federal judge whose rulings in the 1950s and 60s helped end the era of segregated buses, schools, parks and restaurants, Judge Frank Johnson. My husband David tells that Judge Johnson called his dad one night to say that there was a burning white cross, placed in protest, in front of the Dunn house by mistake instead of Judge Johnson's house. Dr. Dunn had to get the hose and put out the fire.

But in my area there wasn't any violence. There was just a lot of watching of all of this and family discussion about it. I remember talking to Alberta McCreary, our housekeeper, with us for 20 years, an African-American lady, who was like a family member in many ways. I remember talking to her about all of this, but there was no violence and no attempt to resist it.

Q: You recall — did the principal, the teachers sort of prepare the students, you know, saying its coming?

BONDURANT: I do not recall a single discussion.

Q: Just happened.

BONDURANT: Just happened. I recall trying to talk about it and people didn't really want to talk about it.

I remember that there was a soft spoken African-American fellow who used to come to our back door and ask to borrow money from my father. This is so Old South in my memory, how it was back then. And Daddy would always lend him money and one day I said, “Well, who is he, Daddy?” And Daddy said, “He is my best friend.” This gentleman grew up on my grandfather's farm with my dad and they were best friends. And yet he stayed as a farm hand and my father went on to go to law school. My father looked so sad when he said that. I think that a few years after those events, Dad's friend joined the latter part of the great migration of African Americans in the south that went to the northern cities to work in the factories. I believe he went to Chicago.

My parents are still in Hickman and it's a good place to retire. My father now serves as a senior Circuit Judge who assists if called upon. He and his friends can drive to the local restaurant for coffee every morning and they play golf. They solve the world's problems in those morning discussions and I have been honored to be included. There is not much traffic and it is safe. My parents remain active in the church, across the street from their home, where the preacher, his family, and many others watch after them now. My dad has been a deacon there for many, many years. But, sadly, the area is economically depressed. There's not much industry there. This particularly dismays my dad, who worked tirelessly as a civic community leader and as a public official, to seek economic development for the area.

During my time as Ambassador, in December of 1998, then Governor of Kentucky Paul Patton visited at our residence in Paris. He and a Kentucky delegation had been to a

foundry in the town of Nantes to watch the creation of the largest freestanding bell in the world built as part of the millennium celebration and destined for Newport, Kentucky. After talking to me about the pride I felt for my local community during that visit, Governor Patton kindly suggested that the World Peace Bell stop at Hickman on its way up the Mississippi River from New Orleans traveling to its new destination. Thus we had a July 1999 river bank celebration with the stop-over of the bell in Hickman. This included public officials as well as an amusing Mark Twain double. I was honored to speak there, on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Q: In high school any courses you particularly liked or didn't like — you obviously had good grades or you wouldn't have been valedictorian.

BONDURANT: I loved literature and history probably more than anything else. I was active with the cheerleading squad, which incorporated gymnastics into its routines. It was before Title IX [of the Civil Rights Act] was amended to prohibit sex discrimination in education spending, so there was little money for girls' sports.

Q: Well, while you were in high school, did the outside world intrude much, I mean maybe the outside world being New York — Moscow.

BONDURANT: My father insisted that for two weeks a year we travel all over the United States. By the time we were out of high school we had been to every state except two. During these travels, we often talked about issues relevant to the particular area. We often discussed current events at home. I recall debating my father on topics like the death penalty at the dinner table. We had a running debate that went on for years. Dinner was a big deal in my family.

Q: You got together, you and your sisters?

BONDURANT: Every night, we had dinner together, which my mother prepared, and she was an excellent cook. We discussed current events. We always watched the news,

the national evening news, and then we had dinner, and our discussions were inspired by the evening news. I recall discussions about the worldwide ramifications of the great depression and the World Wars.

My husband, David E. Dunn, and my son, David Bondurant Dunn, and I still carry on that tradition of watching the news and then having dinner together. My husband is the gourmet cook in my household, however. Our son is as curious as we both were growing up so we have lively discussions. I am amazed at my son's knowledge of history and current events and his thoughtfulness about this. Unfortunately, the U.S. evening news, especially then and even now, doesn't cover international events as much as one would like.

Q: It's getting worse —

In high school, were you interested in any foreign countries or language or anything of that nature?

BONDURANT: In part, because of our knowledge of our French Huguenot heritage, our family remained very interested in France. We also knew that we were descended from Charlemagne and several signers of the Magna Carta. We read about our ancestry and that took us to other lands and made history come alive across the great pond. I studied the only foreign language available to me in high school, Latin.

Q: Well, did the Huguenot heritage follow through, I mean did you remain Protestant?

BONDURANT: Yes, I think the Huguenot heritage played a large role in that. My immediate family belonged to the “frontier” Protestant church, i.e. the Baptist Church. Now I am a member of the Episcopal Church, which is the church of my husband's family.

I spoke two weekends ago to the Bondurant Family Association of America in Lexington, Kentucky, about how it was to be a Bondurant and to go back and live in France after

three hundred years. I talked to them about my observations about the Huguenot heritage and how living in France made me realize how my family still embodies French culture. My husband also spoke and he reinforced this notion from his observations of the French culture and the Bondurant family respectively.

Actually, my mother's ancestors were Huguenots as well. And I think that the fierce independence and the drive for fairness that characterized the Huguenots, the importance of being able to freely practice religion, is very evident in my family members.

Q: These strains, you know, last a lot longer than most people think.

BONDURANT: Mary Bondurant Warren, a wonderful family member who has written extensively about the Bondurant families, has said, “After all, it has just been a few hundred years that this family married people from other areas. Before that, it was many hundreds of years that they were there in the area that is southern France. So those genes are strong.” Whether it's environmental or genetic, I don't know.

Q: Well, next, what was the social life like?

BONDURANT: I was a tomboy as a young girl. I occasionally went hunting and fishing with my father, as he had no sons. The natural beauty of the area is incredible. One could sit in the back area of our home, which is on a high hill or bluff of the Mississippi River and see wild eagles soaring above the tree filled valley below through the large picture window.

In the early 1960s, when I was a young teen, kids would often have an old car to drive as soon as they had their license. I was thrilled that my older sister and her friends would take me “riding around” from a drive-in diner on one side of town to the teen hangout on the other side of town. That was a big social scene at the time.

Q: Yeah. I was wondering were there movies or skating rinks or that sort of thing?

BONDURANT: Yes, there were skating rinks where we had fun. We would walk from the top of the bluff, less than a block from our house, down the steps of the landmark, picturesque Courthouse where my dad was then county judge. We'd go to the local movie theater in the heart of the town near the river bank. We could go there unescorted as children as it was safe in those days. I remember also that bowling was a new sport at the time.

Q: Bowling. aah.

BONDURANT: I read my scrapbook from seventh and eighth grade to my son last night and it said my favorite things to do were bowling, golf, swimming, reading, and boating. I was in a bowling league in elementary school and a bus would take our team to the bowling alley. My dad was one of the organizers and early presidents of the country club and there I learned to play golf.

Q: Well then you obviously were pointed towards higher education. Where did you go and why?

BONDURANT: I went to the University of Kentucky. My father was an elected official, so from that stand-point he thought that attending my state university where he had gone, made a lot of sense.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BONDURANT: '69 to '72.

Q: Did '68, — how about the Vietnam War, did that make any ripples getting over to your place?

BONDURANT: Oh, huge. In fact, the Vietnam War protests resulted in changes in the student rules. The Kent State University massacre, in which four students were shot by

the Ohio National Guard during a protest against President Nixon's Vietnam War policy, occurred in 1970, my freshman year. That year, there were dorm hours, but that was soon to change. Many students flouted the restrictions on hours and left the dorm after hours as the ROTC building was burning. This was in the wake of the Kent State deaths. That evening exodus from the dorm was a catalyst for changing the policy on dorm hours and they no longer existed after that. I, along with many other students participated in peaceful protests against the Vietnam War.

Q: How did it manifest itself at the University of Kentucky?

BONDURANT: There were great gatherings, peaceful demonstrations, walks, protests, and marches. School closed a few weeks early that year after the building burned and we had no final exams because there was so much unrest. That was in 1970.

There was a big change in lifestyle. I was president of Panhellenic, the governing organization of all the campus sororities, which was a large group at the University of Kentucky. I worked to try to make that system more accessible to all students. And I remember saying to the woman who was the advisor, “You know I really don't want to be Panhellenic President. A lot of my friends are not in the Greek [fraternity/sorority] system.” I remember she said, “Well, you're the kind of person that needs to be leading the Panhellenic system now. Times are changing and students are changing, and your values reflect this changing time.” So it was a time of change, of protest and reevaluation. Many of the universities, especially in the South, recognized this a bit later than in the northern schools.

Q: I was just thinking that in the South, from what I gather, although I didn't go to school there, that the fraternity-sorority system was quite strong, particularly the sorority system.

BONDURANT: It was. I think there were 4000 students in the system at the University of Kentucky.

Q: And in a way it's sort of subtracted from the educational process. It was social but controlled social —

BONDURANT: It has been criticized as being elitist because the process for joining was selective. Some may have too much emphasis on partying and not enough emphasis on academics, but that was not my experience.

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: I think I learned a lot from the sorority experience. Greek system members took social responsibility very seriously. And I think it was a good thing. I didn't really get training in social responsibility and participation in philanthropic endeavors at other places at that time. Also the university was large and the sorority was a way to make friends in an environment that encouraged that. Some people in the Greek system partied to excess, no doubt, but the socialization it provided was important too.

Q: What sorority were you in?

BONDURANT: Delta Delta Delta.

Q: Oh yeah, the tri-Delts.

BONDURANT: Yes.

Q: Did you find that there was a, a new breed coming down the road of young women?

BONDURANT: Yes.

Q: You know what I mean, before — an Mrs. degree and a

BONDURANT: I was attracted to the Tri Deltas at UK because they were a group of very individualistic women. Some of my current friends were there, such as Linda Breathitt,

who I mentioned previously, and those remain important relationships to me. Linda is now my son's godmother. In fact, we were confirmed in the Senate a day apart for federal positions, coincidentally, when I became Ambassador and she became a Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner.

Q: At the university at that time, did you see some of the political things that were going on at some of the universities where young people radicals at the time had a chance to try their wings, in a way to say manipulate demagoguery and all that? I mean, were you aware of sort of the politics of the campus which must have been quite acute at that time?

BONDURANT: Oh it was, yes, it was very stimulating. I was very aware of politics and would often go to the local pub or coffeehouse such as the Paddock with my friends and discuss politics and international events late into the night. It was fun, it was interesting, and it was stimulating.

Q: Let's talk about the outside world again. This time let's talk about what was happening in Asia, Europe and Latin America, too, I mean was this coming across your radar at all?

BONDURANT: I did travel to Europe with my closest friend from Hickman, Nancy Jo James, between our freshman and sophomore years. We went to eleven European countries on a 3 to 4 week tour with other students. We were in East Germany, I recall, where I was interviewed as a U.S. college student by the BBC regarding the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Wall. Right after college, I went to South America for several months. So I was exposed through travel. Of course, we were all focused on Asia and the Vietnam War. International issues were a focus in my history and political science classes, but in retrospect I wish I had focused even more on international events.

Q: This has always been a problem of maybe the west coast and the east coast are a little closer; there's a different outlook. You mentioned the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) building burned?

BONDURANT: Yes.

Q: What happened?

BONDURANT: I don't know what happened for sure.

I recall speculation that the motivation for the burning of the building was a reaction to what happened at Kent State. The incident occurred during a period of several weeks in which otherwise relatively peaceful demonstrations were occurring as a reaction to the deaths at Kent State, but no one was ever charged to my knowledge. It was too bad that destruction of property occurred, but thankfully no one was injured.

Q: What did you major in?

BONDURANT: Telecommunications was my major.

Q: What does that mean?

BONDURANT: I took a lot of writing classes, but also photography, film and video courses, which I loved. I took courses on the history and business of communications.

Q: Well, what was that pointing you towards? Or was it?

BONDURANT: My first grade teacher says she heard me say when I was seven years old say to my friend, “I'm going to be a lawyer because I'll need to take care of my family.” I wasn't really searching or thinking about a career in college. I don't know what my major was pointing me towards. But I did have an early perspective that I would go to law school because that's what my father did.

Q: Did, were there any teachers that you particularly think of at this point that struck you?

BONDURANT: Mrs. Patsy Jo Roberts and Mrs. June Johnson, both grade school teachers.

Q: Well fine, yeah.

BONDURANT: Both of whom talked to me a lot about my writing. I remember that Mrs. Johnson said that she wouldn't be surprised to see my writing in print in later years, which, of course, was reinforcing. They were inspirational teachers.

Q: Well then, we're talking about law school, I mean, where were you pointed towards? Where were you going to go to law school?

BONDURANT: When you say pointed towards, what do you mean? I have rarely in my professional life planned for what I was going to do next. I think that's maybe a difference between men and women. But I have rarely done that.

Q: Well, I think, particularly a man more or less is trained to think that way I think, it comes this way. I mean — we're talking about a generation — I'm 77 years old now so this may, but thinking, an awful lot of women, I mean there sort of, whatever plans they have — a guy is going to show up and that will change the whole course of everything, this is behind an awful lot of thinking, I mean

BONDURANT: But not for me. Why, I don't know. I remember for years saying I was not going to get married. I, in fact, adore being married to my husband, but I did say, “I'm not going to get married.”

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: I didn't want to be hemmed in by that tradition. So that was part of the 60s/70s rhetoric, or thinking.

Q: Well, how about the other revolt that was going on that was feminism and Betty Friedan and Ms. Magazine. You know, I mean that whole thing?

BONDURANT: I was always very sympathetic.

Q: But, but do you feel it was part of your generation?

BONDURANT: In a way I felt like it was a little older than I was.

Q: Well, you know, these things have their point and then all of a sudden —

BONDURANT: They were talking about it but I and others my age were living it in terms of having careers that had been traditionally male dominated.

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: I was the next generation and I benefited from the founders of the women's revolution.

Q: Benefited from it. I think all of us have, you know, rested on the shoulders of others.

BONDURANT: Yeah. So I didn't really talk about it that much. I just did it.

Q: Where did you go to law school?

BONDURANT: There is a story about how I ended up in a law school in Washington, DC. I went to South America with my friend Linda Breathitt when we graduated from college. I absolutely loved to be in other countries and experience other cultures. When I was in South America my appendix ruptured and as I came back I almost died.

Q: When did it happen?

BONDURANT: It possibly happened on the plane. The doctors were not sure.

I made it back to Memphis, Tennessee to a Baptist hospital there. I was in that hospital for six weeks, lost a huge amount of weight and my hair, and it was really very bad. It affected me in terms of my future outlook. Before that time I rebelled against the “script” of going to law school and following my father and then after my hospitalization I went right to law school.

In the spring, I enrolled at the University of Kentucky Law School because I had been ill in the fall semester. I was still ill the first semester so I came in the second semester. Linda's father asked if I wanted to come to Washington as an intern for Senator Ford from Kentucky for the summer. I think my friends were trying to help me because I had been very sick. I went to Washington and I was an intern for Senator Ford and after being an intern for a couple of months, he asked me to stay and take a legislative staff position.

Q: That's a legal, legislative position.

BONDURANT: I started as a legislative aide but it I became a legislative assistant, which is a higher position. I remember saying, “But, how and on what basis can you ask me to do that? I've been acting as a receptionist in your office.” And he said, “People who do the little things well will do the big things well.” So I stayed and attended classes at American University's (AU) law school at night.

I remember calling my dad before I accepted the position and saying, “What should I do?” And he said, “Of course, you work in Washington and you go to law school at night. I always wanted to work in Washington.” I was doing what he had always wanted to do. So, I went to AU. I had been eligible for the KY Law Journal so my grades were fine for transferring to the DC law schools. AU would take a one-semester transfer and the other Washington schools wouldn't.

I found AU's law school to be excellent. The university had an international focus with many foreign students.

Q: This is American University. Well, tell me, Senator Ford, what is his first name?

BONDURANT: Wendell.

Q: Talk about him a bit. Where did he fall in and what was he doing?

BONDURANT: He was supportive of the “common man”, the middle class and workers. He tried to do everything he could politically on issues that affected these people. And he was very much salt of the earth. I worked for him on issues that fell within the jurisdiction of the Senate Committees on Commerce and the Judiciary. After I got my law degree, I worked at the Commerce Committee as a counsel to the Consumer Subcommittee.

Q: Well, let's talk about your experience on the Hill.

BONDURANT: I worked on Capitol Hill for twelve years.

Q: What were your initial impressions? This is a unique world of interns and then you moved into a staff position. This is very difficult sort of entr#e and it's going on today, too. But in a way it's a world unto itself. How did you find it when you first got there?

BONDURANT: The Senate was a great fit for me because people who enjoy working with others to help influence policy tend to do well there. The experience there was a good background for my later position as Ambassador to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Throughout my life, I have focused on mediation, and I've worked to bring everyone together. During my time as a legislative assistant, I worked both sides of the aisle, attempting to bring both Republican and Democratic support to legislative proposals. Those were my natural predilections, and that's what Senator Ford wanted.

My first few years were the hardest, and then after some experience I found it much easier. I loved the atmosphere on the Hill. To be successful, I did have to learn how to

be tougher and to avoid advantage being taken. It was hard to learn how to adjust in a professional environment, to transition from student life to professional life. The Hill was its own little town, and it became very familiar to me.

Q: I was just thinking that you've got a lot of young high achievers, sharp elbows in a place like that. Did you find that among the staff?

BONDURANT: Oh, I did. The most important characteristic, even among the sharp elbows, is persistence. The best formula for me was to move toward my goal and quietly but firmly proceed even in the face of deterrence.

I remember an early example of this. Ken Feinberg, now a well-known Washington mediation expert, was Senator Edward Kennedy's (D-MA) senior counsel on the Judiciary Committee and floor manager of a major piece of landmark legislation, the Hart-Scott-Rodino antitrust bill. He said no to me ten times when I approached him seeking floor time for Senator Ford to introduce an amendment. I was determined that Senator Ford would not have to ask Senator Kennedy about this. On the eleventh try, he looked at me and realized that I was not going away, and said, “Of course, when would he like to offer it?”

Q: On the Commerce Committee, what were the issues that you particularly became involved in?

BONDURANT: Well, the one on which I expended the most effort was the product liability issue. Senator Fritz Hollings (D-SC) was the chairman of the Commerce Committee and I staffed him on those issues. He was a former trial lawyer who opposed the federal product liability bill. He was a brilliant senator, and I admire him a great deal. He is one of the most principled people I have ever met and a huge intellect. Though he had extraordinarily high expectations about work product and did not suffer fools lightly, it was exhilarating to work for him.

Q: Could you explain what product liability legislation was.

BONDURANT: For years, product manufacturers have wanted a federal law that would limit their liability to consumers who are injured by their products. They feel that the current system, which is based on each state's common law and jury cases arising from that law, frequently results in excessive jury awards to plaintiffs who have been harmed by their products, thus making the market inefficient. Senator Hollings strongly supported the existing system and we fought to prevent a federal product liability law from being enacted.

Many who represented the victims' points of view felt the state common law provided fair standards in litigation over whether a victim could recover from a manufacturer for an injury caused by a defective product. They believe these standards encourage manufacturers to more quickly change their products to make them safer and to correct the safety defects, rather than to face additional jury awards after a defect was discovered.

So that was the essence of that debate, and it was very controversial. I was the counsel for Senator Hollings on this effort for several years. He was in the majority when it first started, and then he became the Ranking Minority member of the Senate Commerce Committee. He succeeded during that time in preventing the product liability bill from passing.

Another legislative effort I worked on was the Federal Trade Commission bill. One reason that was interesting was because it was the first time that a federal agency went without funding through the appropriations process. In later years when that happened, it was a big brouhaha.

In these years, in the earlier years, the pendulum on consumer safety had swung as far left as it was going to swing for many years.It was right before Ronald Reagan became president, during the Carter years. Michael Pertschuk, who had been the staff director of the Senate Commerce Committee under Senator Warren Magnuson (D-WA), became chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

I was the consumer counsel on the Senate Commerce Committee handling the Federal Trade Commission funding reauthorization. Many powerful business groups were angry because the Federal Trade Commission was trying to regulate them to protect consumers. So, centrist democratic senators, foreshadowing a more conservative movement to come, stood up for regulatory reform as opposed to further regulation without adequate understanding of the burden to businesses, particularly small businesses and the benefit to consumers. They were also seeking greater balance. They wanted to reevaluate the national legal standards under which the agency was issuing regulations, and that was very controversial. The CBS news show “60 Minutes” covered the controversy, shooting footage at one of our Committee meetings, and there was a lot of press coverage in the New York Times and the Washington Post, and other media.

Q: It was a program that would sort of expose things.

BONDURANT: Yes. And it was interesting for me from a personal perspective because I met my husband in that effort. He was a lawyer representing a coalition that included, among others, the American Civil Liberties Union, the broadcasters, the toy manufacturers, the advertisers, and the sugar manufacturers on something called the FTC effort to regulate Children's Television Advertising.

Q: That seems like a peculiar combinatiothe American Civil Liberties and the sugar people.

BONDURANT: Yes, the advertising issue involved those who were concerned about the constitutional first amendment right of free speech and those economic interests that utilized advertising of their products. The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard did a case study on that legislative initiative. It foreshadowed the Reagan revolution soon to come against government regulatory actions. The senators with whom I worked on the effort attempted to take a balanced approach in reining in the agency, without taking away its key and important powers to regulate on behalf of the consumer. Within months of signing the law that was the result of that effort by President Carter, the conservative

Reagan and Republican electoral sweep of the Congress occurred and the policies and initiatives that resulted demonstrated how balanced our efforts had been on the FTC law.

As to your statement about the peculiar combination of lobbying interests, the Kennedy school study was very interested in this first example of the use of the broad based lobbying groups. My husband-to- be worked in the law firm of Patton Boggs, and Tom Boggs, the senior partner with whom he worked at that time, was credited with bringing together this very interesting coalition that opposed the FTC's effort to limit children's advertising as an unconstitutional first amendment limit. This was the beginning of the now common lobbying technique of bringing together coalitions of dissimilar entities who have a common objective.

This can be effective. For example, if you're a sugar manufacturer, it's going to be difficult to be persuasive if you're arguing that you should be able to advertise on Saturday morning on children's shows as you are trying to promote your own economic interest in sales. But if you bring in the American Civil Liberties Union on the constitutional issues and the Washington Post then calls the FTC, the “national nanny,” you began to get some traction politically. So, that was what happened and it was the beginning of those broad based business and nonprofit group coalition efforts in an effort to attract those who could bring more political power and persuasive arguments to the cause.

Q: Well, considering the viciousness of the situation on the Hill in the last decade or so between the Democrats and the Republicans, I mean, then it's sort of reaching new highs. How was it during the time you were there?

BONDURANT: I can only tell you that my charge during those days of the debate over the authority of the FTC was to go get the Republicans on board. In the Senate, ninety five percent of legislation is passed by unanimous consent and not debated on the Senate floor, and filibusters can be stopped with sixty votes. You can be far more effective by

having both parties on board, and in those days bipartisan cooperation was very strong. (A call interrupts interview)

Q: Okay, well, you've got to get your child. How old is he?

BONDURANT: Fourteen. We are proud of David, as he is a hard working student. He is also a stand-up comic and performer, so he keeps us laughing.

Q: Oh boy. Okay, so you have to pick up your son so we'll pick this up next time and I was just asking you the question about the time you were working on the Hill in the Senate about the atmosphere and all because there's so much contention there now, and I was just wondering from your perspective. We'll talk some more about that. Great.

Today is October sixteenth, 2008. This is a continuation of an interview with Amy Bondurant. Amy, where we left it off was we had been talking about your time in the Senate. You were working the Senate from when to when?

BONDURANT: I worked in the Senate for twelve years, finishing in 1987. I started in 1975.

When you were with the Senate since things have gotten so acrimonious in Washington lately, what was the atmosphere when you were there?

BONDURANT: When I was there, it was very cordial. A part of my time there was as senior counsel to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and I did that for many years. Before then, I worked on one senator's staff as a legislative assistant handling different subject areas. My mission or charge was from these various Democratic senators for whom I worked, particularly the chairmen of my committees.

Q: Who were?

BONDURANT: I worked for Senator Wendell Ford, Democrat from Kentucky, as both a legislative aide/assistant and as counsel to the Consumer Subcommittee that he chaired.

Senator Fritz Hollings, Democrat from South Carolina, was chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. I worked for Senator Al Gore from Tennessee when he was chairman of the Consumer Subcommittee for the last period of time I worked on the Hill.

It was interesting to work for Senator Gore, as he was more my contemporary in age. He was relatively new to the Senate at that time but it was obvious that he was going to be a person who made a difference in the policy world. He was extremely hard working and conscientious. Coincidentally, my grandfather from the Union City area of Tennessee had been a very active supporter and my mother says, county chairman, of the father of Al Gore, Senator Albert Gore, Sr.

On the question of atmosphere at the time, I remember Senator Ford used to say, “You have written this legislation and we have the policies outlined like we want it. Now take it to the other side. Get the ranking member to sign on before we do anything else.” So in other words, at that point in time, before you spoke to members of your own party, you would find the ranking member of the other party or another leading member of the other party to sign the legislation. It was considered a stronger starting point to have both sides of the aisle as major sponsors. I don't think that is the attitude today.

Q: From what I gather. But what about the Republican and Democratic staff?

BONDURANT: I was a Democratic staffer.

Q: Well what about your Republican colleagues? I mean what sort of role were they playing with legislation in your work?

BONDURANT: On the committee staff, we all worked pretty closely together. Of course there were issues, like the Federal Product Liability bill, where Senator Hollings was the major opponent. It was my job to oppose that bill. So I wasn't working with the Republican staff counterparts at that point whose members were in large part supporting the bill. But

on most legislative efforts during my 12 years on the Hill, generally speaking, it was very amicable; there was a good working relationship between Democrats and Republicans. There was the perspective that we were working for the common good.

Q: Well in the commerce committee and the committees you were working with, were there any particular issues that one or maybe both sides were working on and then ones where there was considerable opposition from one side or the other?

BONDURANT: Yes. The considerable opposition I would cite would be the Federal Product Liability bill. It wasn't necessarily Democratic-Republican, but there were more Republicans supporting the Federal Product Liability bill, that is to make federal standards that would be used in all court cases, tort court cases, that would be more pro defendant, pro big companies as opposed to the plaintiffs/victims who were injured.

Legislation where we had both Republican and Democratic support was the Federal Trade Commission Authorization bill which I talked about previously. Every three years, that agency was re-authorized, i.e. authority was given by the Congress to fund the agency. That agency was considered to be one that was out of control with respect to regulation, and the Congress wanted to trim its sails. So we did pass legislation that was very controversial. We worked with Republicans and Democrats to curtail its powers.

This legislation included regulatory reform for this agency before the government wide regulatory reform legislation became law so it was precedent setting in that regard. There were many people who wanted to completely gut that agency, so as Democrats leading that effort, and it was an effort in opposition to President Carter who didn't want us to cut the agency's authority at all, we faced trying to trim it back a little back. We established regulatory reform and fairer governance within that organization but at the same time we preserved a strong, viable Federal Trade Commission that continued to have strong competition standards and strong consumer protection standards. It was the FTC Improvement Act of 1980.

So it became law before Carter lost the election in 1980 for a second term. It was considered to be the forerunner for agency regulatory reform. The Committee also covered governance of all the modes of transportation and the issues surrounding this subject area tended to divide along state interest lines rather than party lines.

Q: How did you find the Carter administration from your perspective? Were they the initiators, were they helpful? Were they a problem?

BONDURANT: The head of domestic policy in the White House for President Carter was Stuart Eizenstat. I found him to be a brilliant person with whom to work. Years later, he became the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the OECD when I was U.S. Ambassador. He was Undersecretary of Economic Policy at the Department of State and I worked with him again. It was wonderful to have that opportunity. I had also worked with him in the private sector. When we were both lawyers for various clients, we would occasionally work on the same issues.

But in response to your question about the Carter administration, they were smart and they were very professional. But I do think for, example, during the Federal Trade Commission legislation negotiations, they probably didn't sufficiently calculate the political effect of the pendulum swinging back politically. They were not willing to compromise at first, not willing to make sure that the agency regulatory efforts were as balanced as the Congress thought they needed to be. Those were difficult negotiations, but the Administration remained professional.

Q: Were there any sort of personalities that really stand out in your mind in the Senate that particularly impressed you?

BONDURANT: Well, we had Democratic Senator Howard Metzenbaum from Ohio on the left and Republican Jesse Helms from North Carolina on the right. I remember that those of us who occupied the center ground felt like that they often slowed down our

legislative initiatives unnecessarily. Nevertheless, they were also important voices at that time because they were the outliers. Though they did create delay, it was helpful to insure that all perspectives were given. They didn't stop the legislative will of the majority (reflecting the center) from ultimately prevailing.

Q: Well this question is one that often is not as apparent to the outsider, the fact that there should be somebody saying wait a minute, look at this. Because once a law is enacted all sorts of things could happen. You had better be aware of all the consequences.

BONDURANT: Absolutely. Now unfortunately, the political make- up of the body has changed so much and the rules of procedure have changed, so that it is the center that is at risk from not being heard as legislation is blocked.

Q: Well then you left the Senate...

BONDURANT: I worked in the Senate for twelve years, and was there long enough to be acknowledged for my expertise. It was nice to leave the Senate as an expert in my field, and to be fairly well known at the time in the area for which I worked.

Q: Well speaking of experts in the field, before you left there (and we are speaking about the role of eras now) at that time how would you describe the role of lobbyists in your particular area of expertise, transportation?

BONDURANT: I was the senior counsel for the Consumer Subcommittee, and the lobbyists were very active on all sides, representing both public and private interests. We tried to make sure that we heard all sides. For each issue, there were business lobbyists and public interest lobbyists.

Q: Yeah it also is said that the people are not as well represented as industry because industry can pay all this money for lobbyists. You seem to imply differently.

BONDURANT: I agree that what you said is often the case. But in my experience, the consumer perspective was well represented. We made sure that our hearings were balanced. I considered it my first duty to make sure that all views were heard. Truly, in my area, it was very important. The individual on the street by himself in his individual capacity wasn't represented, but the public interest groups were there and had very capable people to represent them. On the product liability legislation, for example, one side had business lawyers and lobbyists and the other had the public interest groups as well as the trial lawyers, another moneyed interest, of course.

Q: Well I think the trial lawyers get a bad rap sometimes. They figure they are going to get 10 to 30 percent of whatever money comes from litigation and recompense. What was your impression of the trial lawyer lobby and all?

BONDURANT: In Washington, in my experience, the Trial Lawyer Association had responsible and respected people. I talked to many individual trial lawyers as well.

Q: Well then you left this job when?

BONDURANT: In 1987.

Q: Whither?

BONDURANT: I went to the law firm of Verner, Lipfert, Bernhard, McPherson, and Hand. After six months of being in an “of counsel” capacity, I became a partner or shareholder. I became a member of the board of that law firm and the first woman on its executive committee. I practiced there for ten years. This firm included former Senator and Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX), former Senate Majority and Minority Leaders George Mitchell (D-ME) and Bob Dole (R-KS). I was head of client development when these brilliant men came on board and was privileged to work with both Secretary Bentsen and Senator Dole.

Q: Did the law firm itself specialize in anything?

BONDURANT: They began as an aviation firm but evolved into a firm that practice all kinds of Washington work, both regulatory and in the policy arena, as well as corporate work and litigation. I worked closely with many of my partners, and learned a lot from them about practicing law in Washington, D.C. In particular, Berl Bernhard, a founding member of the firm who had been Director of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission under President Kennedy, and Harry McPherson, who was a special counsel to President Lyndon Johnson, were mentors to me; and I also worked closely with Lloyd Hand, chief of protocol at the State Department under President Johnson.

Q: Any particular issues that you got yourself involved in particularly?

BONDURANT: I had a large array of issues. I practiced regulatory law in the areas of international trade and export control, consumer protection, antitrust, communications, aviation, auto regulation, and aerospace. I practiced before the regulatory agencies and also did Hill-based work on policy issues. I did not go to the Hill very much to represent clients. But I represented coalitions where I worked primarily as a strategist.

Q: What was your impression of, assuming you are somewhat on the other side, being in a law firm looking at the operation of Congress during these ten years?

BONDURANT: Well it was fascinating, because in representing one company or a coalition of companies, as a lawyer on the outside, I could make a huge difference with respect to those companies, but as an attorney working on the inside, I could possibly to affect an entire industry or even larger areas of the economy.

But on one piece of legislation, we did affect things in a fairly major way. This was an amendment to the federal bankruptcy law that became the precedent for a later law that would affect entire industries in the area of toxic tort litigation. We represented Johns-Manville, a company that had asbestos claims against it, as its workers had been exposed

and later many developed a terrible deadly disease, asbestosis. The problem was there were so many claims that the company was going to become bankrupt, and in fact, would have gone under because the claims would have eliminated all the funds. The problem was there were future claimants, who had not yet developed the disease, but who had been exposed. The issue we faced was how to be fair to all involved, the present and the future claimants. We worked with Senator Howell Heflin (D-AL) on this as he was Chairman of the Bankruptcy Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee for several years. He was the former Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Courin fact, was often referred to by his colleagues as “Judge” Hefliand was a dedicated and well respected senator. I worked with an effective group of attorneys and advocates on behalf of this client, and also worked with my law partner, Bernie Wruble, to write legislative language to fix the problem.

It was a difficult effort, but ultimately we created a firewall so that the company could continue to exist and create jobs and grow and thus create money for the recovery fund. The recovery fund then dealt with all the claimants and was the entity that would be sued by those who had been injured as opposed to the company itself. In fact, this legislative solution became well known and was the basis for changes that were made in the law some years later for dealing with many companies who had the same toxic tort issues. As we used to say, “How can we make sure that the goose that lays the golden eggs, isn't killed before enough eggs can be produced to benefit all who need them?”

Q: You might explain what the asbestos problem was.

BONDURANT: It was a problem of workers and consumers being exposed to asbestos which was used in insulation for many years.

Q: This is to the lungs.

BONDURANT: Exposure could and often did cause asbestosis, an often fatal and debilitating disease which damaged the lungs, as well as other fatal diseases. The diseases would often develop years after the exposure. Thus the law on which we worked

resulted in a model for other kinds of toxic tort situation where companies have a lot of ongoing liability, which may develop over the years, resulting in a need to ensure that the maximum number of claimants can continue to recover over time.

Q: Did you keep your toe in the political pool?

BONDURANT: I did. I was heavily involved with issues for the Democratic Party. For example, I worked with Pamela Harriman in creating the Consumer chapter for her book, Democrats for the 80s. She created the book while working with a large group of people to advise Democratic candidates and to lay out platforms on different issues in the 1980s when both the White House and Congress were under Republican control.

Q: I have heard that you worked with Pamela Harriman. She was a very impressive person.

BONDURANT: I also worked on issues in various presidential campaigns over the years and later worked in White House personnel for a period during the transition and the beginning of the Clinton Administration.

Q: Your field was pretty much the consumer wasn't it?

BONDURANT: Well it certainly became much broader than that and I had a large diverse client base. Though I have talked about an example of representing clients on Capitol Hill, I had a large federal agency practice. The issues included consumer, mergers and acquisitions and the Exon-Florio national security clearance process, transportation, aviation, communications, competition, international trade, international export control, aerospace. As a lawyer I really worked on a very wide range of issues. My clients had issues involving the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation including the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Highway Traffic Control Administration, the U.S. Trade Trade Representative,

the Consumer Product Safety Commission, NASA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State.

Q: Well did you find there were times when your lawyer hat interfered with your politician hat?

BONDURANT: You mean, in other words, if I was working on a political issue for a campaign, and clients had a different interest? Is that what you mean?

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: I can't think of any situations where that happened.

Q: Well you know eventually.

BONDURANT: I will give you an example of something I suggested as a lawyer to my clients involving a presidential campaign though I was not working on issues with any candidate at that time. I represented a company that came to us when the funding for the International Space Station was eliminated by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. So I pulled together a large group of people in my law firm who represented the client on Capitol Hill and I worked as a strategist for this company and the coalition of aerospace companies in which they participated. We went back to the House of Representatives and helped to regain the funding for the space station.

Q: You might explain what the Space Station is.

BONDURANT: The Space Station was a platform that would be launched to provide a work station and a laboratory in space to be accessed with the space shuttle. Major components of the project were being built in Texas. After the successful effort in the House of Representatives to restore funding, we recommended that the Space Station group of companies with facilities in Texas go to each presidential candidate, both Democratic and Republican, in Texas during the primary campaigns to ask for

their support for the project. This was very early while it was still primary season. The companies did that, very early and well before these candidates were thinking about the funding. Each candidate agreed that should he be elected president, he would support the space station. That was at a time when it was not clear that the Space Station would become a reality, but it was important for it to get the support of the next president.

Q: How did you find the Bush I administration in the fields with which you were concerned?

BONDURANT: Well I think the first President Bush was more supportive of business, but fairly balanced.

Q: Well we are moving up to the time you are, what was your...

BONDURANT: When I talk about balance I think that in business regulation the pendulum swings between excessive regulation and no regulation, letting the free market do what it will. For example, in the Carter Administration, the pendulum had swung in some areas to probably excessive regulation. Some regulatory efforts needed to factor in cost efficiency and excessive burden on small business. It did need to think more about small businesses in the balance. In the Reagan administration that followed, the pendulum swung very far and very hard over to the other direction so that there was a push for far less regulation, which would inadequately protect the public interest. In the first President Bush's administration, I think it rested a little more toward the center. And in the second Bush's administration, I would say that the pendulum swung further over to the right where the sense of balance was gone. These are, obviously, broad generalizations.

Q: How did you feel about when the Clinton...

BONDURANT: I thought the Clinton administration regulatory efforts were, in the main, balanced. But here I may be showing my prejudices.

Q: That is fine; you are entitled. What about when Clinton was running things. How did his team strike you at the beginning?

BONDURANT: I was an early supporter. I knew President Clinton; I had worked with him before he was president. I represented public utilities as a lawyer. He was the Governor of Arkansas and we participated together in a public interest public utility organization. How did he strike me when he was running?

Q: Yeah and the tone of his campaign.

BONDURANT: Progressive, open minded, and aggressive. He focused on “the third way”, the platform initially put forward by Al From and the Progressive Policy Institute, which was a centrist approach.

Q: Did you didn't come on board until his second term was it?

BONDURANT: Right. I supported him and worked on issues and in the first term worked in White House personnel for a period. I lead the White House personnel effort in the transition and several months in to the new administration for the Commerce Department subcabinet positions and also worked on filling the USTR subcabinet positions, which were confirmed by the Senate.

Q: In doing that what are you looking at?

BONDURANT: We looked at thousands and thousands of resumes, and had phone calls and notes from various state government officials, Congressional members , the newly proposed cabinet secretaries, and inputs, of course, from the President, and the Vice President. The pressure on us was just incredible. We were on the top floor of the transition team offices. There was security outside our door to keep people from coming in, even the rest of the transition staff, because we were so overwhelmed with input from people wanting jobs. We had three important criteria among others that we used. We

called it the three legged stool: seeking policy expertise for the position being sought; looking at issues of geographic, ethnic or gender diversity; and seeking consistent policy perspective with the administration on the issues for which individuals would be hired to oversee.

Q: What was the reputation of the Department of Commerce?

BONDURANT: There was a perspective that some appointees in various administrations over the years did not have the requisite expertise, and that the Department had been in the past a political dumping ground.

Q: The political dumping ground.

BONDURANT: In fact, we received very high marks for the expertise of the people that were nominated and confirmed at the Department of Commerce during the Clinton Administration. The subcabinet positions at the Department require such specific expertise that those positions are not likely to be filled by people who do not have the needed experience, although it may be that some younger campaign staff ended up in lower level positions not requiring a lot of previous experience, and that is probably where that occurs.

Q: One of the things that involves the subject of this interview is foreign affairs, the Department of Commerce has its own foreign service for the director of that. Was that part of your responsibility?

BONDURANT: That position was part of my responsibility.

Q: Did you already have, I mean who was supplying you the names? Did you have a file in your back hip of people who had been in the business a long time and people that knew the trade?

BONDURANT: I had worked as a lawyer on a number of these foreign policy issues at the Department of Commerce, and I did know a number of the people who had their hats in

the ring. I did have a knowledge base of people and issues. The Clinton administration brought together professional personnel people from executive search agencies and policy experts in the area like me. I thought that was a very smart thing to do. As part of the process, we also reviewed the resumes of people seeking the jobs and did extensive outreach to other experts in the area to seek suggestions. It was a lot of work.

Q: Oh yes.

BONDURANT: In the process, we sat with the team and we all shared our views. We put forward lists of names and recommendations. We narrowed that to a short list of recommendations working with staff and the new cabinet secretaries of the relevant agency once they were on board. The President with the assistance of the Vice President and the senior personnel staff made the final decisions after talking with the cabinet secretaries of the relevant agency.

Q: We now are on the tail end of the George W. Bush administration, and what I understand is when they came in 2001, you really had to be ideologically sound before you got things considered. Would you say that ideology was an overriding factor?

BONDURANT: It was important that people had policy perspectives that were consistent with the new Administration, but in my experience there were no litmus tests in the Clinton Administration.

Q: During this time you were on this transition team were you sort of looking for something for yourself?

BONDURANT: No, I had a new baby, and I was not planning to go into the administration, so I was not looking for myself.

Q: Well that made it easier.

BONDURANT: I think that there were only two of us involved in the White House personnel transition who did not go into the administration.

Q: Well it made it easier. What did you do up to the time that you came into the administration?

BONDURANT: At the time of the first transition, I was interviewed by Secretary Federico Pena to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and I did go on that interview. I then called and said I was not interested. But I was flattered to be invited to be interviewed.

Q: Again, was this personal feeling or you just didn't want the job?

BONDURANT: I had made a determination along with my husband that I was not going to go into the administration in any position at that point because of my personal situation with my new baby and with my law practice.

Q: But you continued being a lawyer didn't you?

BONDURANT: Yes, but that was more manageable from a time perspective than taking on a senior policy position in the new Administration.

Q: How did you find working in the lawyer capacity with the first part of the Clinton administration?

BONDURANT: Not very different.

Q: Well then the election of '94 brought in a Republican Senate and House. This particular group seemed to be, and I am showing my partisanship, but compared to other times almost vicious.

BONDURANT: No different than now.

Q: Probably not, but if they started something that has continued, one hopes that it is like we were talking to some who say it looks like the Democrats are going to come in fairly soundly, there isn't this partisanship that is so strong. Did you find this, did this create problems for a working lawyer trying to serve clients because of ideology in Congress or not?

BONDURANT: I think when there was less partisan rancor it was easier for everyone, just easier to do your professional job and not this kind of a layer of inefficiency created by partisan rancor. Let me stop and talk about partisan rancor again just for a moment.

Recently, when I was attending a Nashville event for Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) at the home of former Vice President Gore, my husband and I spent time with our friends Roy and Jenny Neal, who work with Al Gore on the climate change project in his Nashville office. Roy also teaches political science at Vanderbilt University. Roy says that studies show that rancor between the political parties in the Congress occurs historically when the number of members in each party is about equal and a greater degree of congeniality occurs when one party dominates. In my experience on Capitol Hill, this was certainly true.

When I went to the Congress in 1975, during the post- Watergate years, the Democrats dominated in both Houses of Congress and the Administration, and there was a lot of cooperation. There wasn't a lot of rancor. As the years went on, the numbers in the respective parties became very close together; they flip flopped several times. Partisan rancor grew. According to Roy Neal, it is the close numbers, and the ability to control, that may dictate or affect people's behavior.

Q: We have been through a very difficult time according to the foreign policy point of view. As a retired foreign service officer, I am looking forward to a more benign foreign policy. Ok, we move up to when. When did you become an ambassador and how did that come about?

BONDURANT: I had been working in my law firm and increasingly in the management of the firm. I served on the executive committee, and on the board of directors along with another 'diversity candidate,' Bill Kennard. Bill also went in to the Clinton Administration, as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Q: You say diversity, what do you mean?

BONDURANT: I mention this because it was interesting to be the first woman on the executive committee and to be on the board with the first African American to serve in that position for our firm, a major Washington law firm. By diversity, in this context, I mean not white and male.

Q: Yeah, there was a time when if there a bunch of men and one woman sitting around the board of anything, she was handed the pencil expected to take the notes.

BONDURANT: You are right.

Q: Did you feel that you were a trail blazer to a certain extent?

BONDURANT: I have sat many, many times over the years as the only woman in the room, in many different positions. In my early days on Capitol Hill, I remember sitting on the staff couches on the Senate floor with no other women. As a practicing lawyer, this was true with my board work. Later, for a time, I was the only female ambassador among the twenty-nine OECD ambassadors. More recently, I have also served on corporate boards and had the same experience. For example, I served on the board of Rolls Royce, the manufacturer of aviation engines, which is headquartered in London. I was the first woman on that corporate board.

Q: Well did you find you were able to look back and say, “I am a trail blazer,” and try to give an extra push or at least open the door as a sort of a mentor to open the way for more women coming up?

BONDURANT: I think in every job I tried to make sure that more diversity positions were created. I always tried to help younger professional women.

Q: When you were with the transition team for Clinton, was this a pretty good opportunity to do some good...

BONDURANT: I have never been in a situation in which that was so encouraged. Candidates had to have the requisite expertise, but we wanted to make sure there was diversity and balance in choosing candidates.

Q: Did you find the male mafia at work?

BONDURANT: I did not find that. I found that the men I worked with were also looking for diversity. At some point, a number of additional women, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans were brought in to work with us in White House personnel. They had networks of people to suggest. That was very helpful.

Q: One of the things that disturbs me that today looking at the situation one hears much about diversity, but sort of the element that seems to be missing, and it is a very important element is the Hispanic side. I mean I realize the Secretary of Commerce is of Hispanic...

BONDURANT: I should have said Hispanic too because they were working with us too.

Q: But there doesn't seem to be as much participation, and I am not sure what the problem is.

BONDURANT: I don't know.

Q: Yeah, but it is there. All right well then let's go back to how you became an ambassador?

BONDURANT: I had worked in the campaign on issues. I had also worked as a fundraiser, although very modestly. I was never very effective as a fundraiser.

Q: That is hard to do.

BONDURANT: I had worked with the campaigns on policy issues over the years, and in the second Clinton term, the personnel staff told me they were seeking female ambassadors who had professional backgrounds, and they asked if I had any interest. They were doing outreach for that. I think that is how my journey started. The OECD seemed to be a very good fit because so many of the issues before it were based on the very issues on which I had spent a career working.

The OECD, as an organization, is multilateral. It is run very similarly to the way the U.S. Senate operates in that it requires complete agreement of all country representatives before an issue can be accepted by the organization. In the Senate, over 95 percent of the legislation that is passed must be agreed to unanimously — passed by "unanimous consent" — because it is so hard to get floor time for an issue to be debated and voted upon. The OECD was a good fit because I had both the process expertise of working to gain consensus and the substantive experience with many of the issues.

Q: OK, could you explain what the OECD is, how it developed, and what it was at the time you went there.

BONDURANT: OECD stands for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. When I was Ambassador, there were 29 members; it now comprises 34 advanced free market and democratic economies in North America, the Pacific Rim, and Europe including all members of the EU.

Q: European Union.

BONDURANT: Yes, and at that time, several EU candidates. The U.S. looks to the OECD as a forum to help to develop a policy consensus on global issues, such as combating bribery in international trade, electronic commerce, environmental protection, energy security, or money laundering. The OECD also develops common policies or recommendations for the Group of Eight.

Q: The Group of Eight being the eight most affluent countries in the world.

BONDURANT: The Group of Eight includes the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy, and Russia. The process of the OECD is analysis, surveillance, peer review, and sometimes development of common policies and formal rules. In surveillance of new members' economic policies, there are important commitments to removing barriers to trade and investment as a condition of membership, so it promotes multi-lateral nondiscriminatory trade and investment liberalization which hopefully supports global economic growth and is an enabling environment for U.S. businesses.

Q: Then how did you say the OECD was viewed by people in the U.S. government at the time you went there?

BONDURANT: I remember one person who did not have actual experience with the organization told me, “Oh, it does nothing. We shouldn't be a member. We are paying 25 percent of the $240 million budget. We ought to be cutting the budget.” There was a real movement to reform the United Nations and cut the budgets of our multilateral organizations, including the OECD. The leader of this effort in the Senate was Jesse Helms (R-NC), the far right conservative Republican. He and some others on the right believed that American participation in the multilateral organizations was mostly a waste of taxpayer money.

A more prevalent view, fortunately, was that the OECD was a useful organization because it was the only place in which we could go and meet with our counterparts from the other

28 free market democracies in individual committees. Thus hundreds of committees composed of senior agency officials met with their counterparts in the other governments and decided what work would be most helpful to do together. The OECD is the only forum for doing that.

So those were the two competing perspectives in the U.S. The more experience the U.S. policy maker had with the organization, the more positive about the organization he or she seemed to be.

Q: Who had been the ambassador there before you?

BONDURANT: David Aaron, who became Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade when he left the position.

Q: Before had you run across OECD, had it been in your portfolio of involvement?

BONDURANT: No. I had no previous involvement with the OECD. It is really an executive branch organization, where the US government agencies are the most heavily involved. I represented clients as a lawyer before the agencies, and my government service had been in the Senate, which has much less interaction with the OECD, so I had not been involved with the OECD directly. But my issue portfolio and work both from my days in the Senate and in the law firm had prepared me incredibly well for many of the issues that came before the OECD which necessitated my involvement. I found that basically most of my professional experience was relevant to my OECD work because I knew generally about the issues that arose substantively; I knew how to deal internally with our own government agencies who were intensively involved at the OECD; and I knew how to operate in a multilateral world that needed consensus to make things happen based on my experience in the US Senate. Further, my years of travel and friendships with government representatives in the Middle East and Europe, due in great part to my

husband's international law practice, meant that I felt very comfortable immediately with my international counterparts.

Q: Did you have any problem getting confirmed?

BONDURANT: No, not at all.

Q: I wouldn't think so, but I mean these were...

BONDURANT: I had strong support. Senator Hollings from South Carolina, the former chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, and Senator Ford from Kentucky, the former Senate Democratic whip and Chair of the Consumer Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee, with whom I had worked both came and spoke at my confirmation hearing. I did not have a problem.

Q: So you served there from when to when?

BONDURANT: I served there from 1997 to 2001. I was extended by President Bush for six months.

Q: Where is it located?

BONDURANT: It is located in the heart of Paris in the 16th arrondissement, close to the Bois de Boulogne, the large park in central Paris where the French royalty used to hunt. It is located in an old Rothschild chateau, in a beautiful setting near the park. There is also the OECD mission itself. My mission had around 46 staff. We were located in an adjoining building that housed mostly OECD secretariat staff plus four country delegations like ours.

Q: What was your staff like?

BONDURANT: My staff represented twenty-two agencies. As one of my first jobs, I did something that had not been done by my predecessors. I went to Washington and met

with representatives of the twenty-two agencies to make sure I understood what their OECD priorities were. I had people representing all these agencies at the OECD whose job was to staff me, but importantly to staff the U.S. agency senior people when they came to the OECD to meet their counterparts, and to assist their agencies back in the United States on a daily basis.

Q: Did you have a deputy chief of mission?

BONDURANT: I did.

Q: Did you select him or her?

BONDURANT: I kept my predecessor's deputy chief of mission, Dick Morford, who was just excellent. I then selected Richard Behrend halfway through my term, when Dick rotated to another position. Richard was recommended to me by another of my predecessors, the Under Secretary of State for International Affairs, Al Larson.

Q: How did you find your embassy operations? I mean I think they would be difficult because you would have twenty-two agencies saying you have got to do this or do that.

BONDURANT: Well, I think I was happy that I had the legal and Senate experience because I do feel like I walked into that job more prepared than any job I had before it. I knew the agencies well, and the work involved most of the non-defense agencies. I knew a lot about conflict resolution from working in the Senate, and a big part of being a multilateral ambassador involves understanding that. My staff and I worked with the different agencies and their leadership to try to resolve conflicts so that the U.S. government was speaking with one voice. Obviously an ambassador can't speak until there is one U.S. position. The State Department led that effort, and I did need to intervene from time to time.

After achieving a U.S. position, the next challenge for the ambassador is to try and get all the other countries around the table to agree with the U.S. position because an issue cannot become a priority issue to be funded and worked on by the OECD professional staff unless all countries agree.

Q: I would think that a lot of these agencies are not agencies that the State Department normally has much of a relationship with.

BONDURANT: At the OECD there is a long history of working together. It was incredible how well our inter-agency process worked. I was the only ambassador to have a unified position put forward on almost every issue at the council of ambassadors meeting every two weeks. We had an interagency meeting that worked like a well-oiled machine. I was very proud of the U.S. government and how it worked.

The position of OECD ambassador is unique within our government. I think it is probably the only position in the U.S. government where one gets to see how all of the non-defense parts of the U.S. government operate, with the exception of the Secretary of the Cabinet. I spoke with Goody Marshall, who was President Clinton's Cabinet Secretary when I was at the OECD. He and I had both been counsels for Senator Gore on the Consumer Subcommittee of the Senator Commerce Committee. We marveled at how similar the perspective is. One gets to see all the agencies, their different perspectives on an issue, and how the agencies interact as issues boil up. In my position, I saw the US agency positions as issues were discussed, the final US position achieved, and then, in addition, the positions of each of the OECD member governments on these issues of the day.

Q: OK, let's talk about how the OECD operates. What do you do?

BONDURANT: First I am going to tell you quickly about the issues that were a priority and a little bit about the political dynamics when I was there, and then I will talk about my responsibilities, if that is ok.

Q: Yes.

BONDURANT: Looking back over the years that I was there, just from an overview, the issues had a lot to do with globalization. They had a lot to do with the international technology revolution, which was in the headlines at that time. It had a lot to do with modernizing public services and institutions, and tackling international corruption and good governance.

During the second Bush administration, the U.S. was not held in as highly regarded internationally on issues such as good governance as we were when I was in office. When I was there, we were at perhaps at our economic apex, and our economy was thriving. We were the model for the world. We were respected as a country, though there was a level of resentment too. We were still viewed as a country that could be selfless in its actions.

I remember sitting at the OECD table with the 29 other countries and one of my Norwegian colleagues announced to the Council that the U.S. still had a white hat to wear, that any country that would do what the U.S. did in WWII and join the war effort when we didn't clearly have a direct economic or other interest at stake, was a country to admire. My colleague continued that the U.S. would continue to be regarded thus unless they did something to take that white hat off. No other ambassador disagreed. Although we were somewhat resented for being such a power and pushing our positions, we were at the height of our economic prosperity.

We appeared to be a model with respect to our free market. We had reduced our debt. We were not putting new programs in place unless we were paying for them. From an economic standpoint, we appeared to have our house in order. We were still considered to be a country that could act selflessly, uniquely so. Therefore, we were still regarded highly from that standpoint. It was a wonderful time to be at the OECD.

One of my initial responsibilities was to try to reform the organization. I had a background in that because I had worked on agency reforthe Federal Trade Commission and the Consumer Product Safety Commission — and regulatory reform, as a Senate staffer. This was when we were working on Al Gore's initiative to re-invent government.

We had a program to downsize the OECD in response partially to Jesse Helms's initiatives regarding the United Nations but also because it needed to be done. We established a benchmark for the reform of multilateral organizations. We were finally successful, from 1997 to 1999, in reducing the budget by ten percent. That may not seem like a lot, but in the OECD, any initiative has to be endorsed unanimously. The organization was at a total stalemate and literally days, weeks and months had been spent resisting the U.S. government's effort to decrease the budget by the time I arrived, and the other countries refused to agree with that. We were at a total logjam. We had staff demonstrations that stopped meetings. It was a very difficult situation, one that my two predecessors had also worked to change.

I had learned in negotiations in my Senate days that if one could change the discussion from a principle to a money matter there would more likely be agreement. So I began to talk about the amount of dollars involved in a 25 percent share versus the principle of reducing our share. It happened fast when we finally agreed to a small reduction in the amount paid. This agreement was the first to break the stalemate that had gone on for so long among all the multilateral institutions to which the U.S. belonged, so I could see that it was critical to get it approved quickly by our agencies. I called Jim Steinberg, Deputy National Security adviser at the White House to seek help from the President, and sure enough, Jim promptly talked to senior colleagues within the agencies. He called back to say that the position had been cleared as I had requested. As a practical matter, the OECD resolution of the issue paved the way for reductions of the U.S. share at the other multilaterals in short order after our agreement.

After many hours we put a program in place that did “right size” the organization, reducing it by 10 percent, and stabilizing the organization's financing through the creation of a new funded pension plan. Attaining that had also been very difficult. We scrutinized the programs to eliminate overlap, and we achieved a revision of the U.S. scale of financial support.

Q: What does that mean?

BONDURANT: The scale of support was the percentage that the U.S. paid of the organization's budget. We had paid twenty-five percent of the budget and the other countries fought against reducing that. It seems like we should be able to reduce it if we want, but this could only be done by unanimous consent. So we were able to get the other twenty-eight OECD countries to agree to a reduction in our scale of contributions as new members joined the organization. That led the way towards paying for reduction of the United Nations scale, which had been a very difficult issue, and like at the OECD, had really slowed down the ability to move forward on more important issues for a long time.

We succeeded in instituting new priorities, setting mechanisms in the annual budget process, and we chaired a task force to require review of the different policy committees. I reviewed the environmental policy committee. We implemented entire OECD financial controls during the budget presentation. We worked for more transparent budgets and more transparent controls. For the first time, the balance sheet and accounting practices were audited by an outside firm. All of those reforms were very important. I worked very hard for that.

Q: Well were you finding the UNESCO M'Bow syndrome which I understand had been a sort of b#te noir of American thought I guess of this UN crew located in Paris of being sort of a cozy place for political powers of Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow and other things. Was that at all an issue. I mean who were involved in the group that was there?

BONDURANT: The Europeans fought this reform. As the OECD was located in Paris, there were a lot of staff positions held by Europeans. The staff at the OECD wanted no cuts, and they were a strong political force. There were well over 1000 employees. It was a very difficult time.

Q: I see shots sometimes of the European Union, I guess it is their offices in Strasbourg or something, very cozy. I mean nice long lunches and chauffeurs and well dressed doorman and the whole thing. Did you find it a pretty cozy club or was it a working organization?

BONDURANT: Oh, it was a hard working organization. It was not a cozy club; I did not find that. But I did find too many mid-level managers. I do think that our efforts were important to try to streamline. Those efforts have continued, and with a big international organization, those efforts should continue. One should not let up on the effort for efficiency because it is taxpayer money that we were spending and without oversight, it is all too easy for inefficiency to be created in any organization. The OECD is an important international organization in my view. The work is important, but one wants to make sure that it is being done efficiently and effectively for our taxpayers.

Q: How did you find the other ambassadors? Was it a mixed bag or pretty serious sort of people?

BONDURANT: Pretty serious people. The Europeans tended to be ambassadors posted at the OECD as their last post. They were highly regarded, and very thoughtful, and were usually older. The Asians tended to be up and coming stars. I loved that mixture. That created a good dynamic I think. I think the Asians were using that post to train their stars. The Europeans were using it to reward people. They had excellent experience and were really good ambassadors.

Q: Did you find that you were looked upon as the wicked witch of the west or something like that by the staff coming in?

BONDURANT: Oh, I think there was some skepticism about the U.S. ambassador and U.S. senior government officials from the OECD staff because the U.S. was trying to “right size” the agency. So I do think that was an issue. I tried to dispel that. I opened up my residence, for example, to all the American citizens who worked for the OECD itself, over 300 people, most of whom had never been in the residence.

I worked with the State Department curators and the Art in Embassies program to present a three-year exhibit of paintings by the first American female artists to study and work in France. It was fairly well regarded by individuals such as J. Carter Brown, the former director of the National Gallery of Art, who visited us and the exhibit before it opened. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote the introductory material explaining the exhibit. The OECD American staff in previous years had not been very involved with the U.S. delegation, so I invited them to come in and see that exhibit. I wanted to reach out to the OECD staff, a talented group of people.

Q: What were the major issues that you got involved in and how did they come out during your period?

BONDURANT: Other than “right sizing,” we had globalization and the international telecommunications (IT) revolution that were creating enormous economic change. What we tried to do is look at those dynamics and focus on the need to create institutions, insuring that they would be responsive and that citizens would receive the benefits and buffers to dampen the disruptive effect of globalization.

Let me give you some examples. The first day I arrived at the OECD, in November of 1997, I went with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to sign the international Anti-Bribery Convention. That was an interesting experience, because we were practically mobbed by the press and really needed more security than we had present.

Let me interject that Madeleine Albright was very admired by the OECD member representatives, for her intellect, her positive attitude, and her strength and determination. She mentioned to me during this visit the fact that there were so many male ambassadors around the table, and we talked about the dynamics of interacting as women in a room full of male policy makers. She spoke of the challenges of being a woman in such a situation, even for her, when she attended White House national security meetings, for example. That affected me, that we occasionally shared this challenge, even though in very different arenas.

There was a lot of interest in Europe in the Anti-Bribery Convention, which came into force in February 1999. It required the twenty-nine OECD members and five other countries — three quarters of the world's trade — to impose significant criminal penalties on those who bribe foreign government officials. For the first time, there would not be a criminal penalty on the recipient of the bribe, which is often the way that individual countries would try to stop bribery. Instead the penalty would be on the big international companies who bribed foreign government officials. We called them the suppliers.

When I was in office, twenty-nine countries had ratified the convention, and twenty-six had implementing legislation in place. We spent an enormous amount of time working on that implementing legislation. We had a review process where we monitored the national implementing legislation to ensure strong penalties for offenders.

We also reviewed the cases that each country brought once they had the legislation or a new implementing law. For example, our Justice Department representatives and I, along with the other country representatives would be around the table reviewing one country's legislation and recent history of bringing enforcement cases against offenders. That is how the OECD “peer review” process worked. Questions would arise such as, “Is this new law really effective? What is the penalty for the crime? How is the enforcement occurring? Is this country bringing cases? Are people being convicted? If one country was not performing adequately, the other countries would voice criticism around the table, and

then the press would highlight the weakness in its system. This process was enormously effective.

Some say the OECD doesn't have teeth. Well, it did. Governments did not want Transparency International — a nonpartisan organization that measures perceived levels of public sector corruption in countries around the world — telling the press that the OECD governments were saying around the table that the country being examined had brought no cases. That is an example of the way the OECD used its peer review process to encourage other countries to respond to OECD initiatives to which they had all agreed. I am using that as an example for the way that peer review is carried out across the board.

Q: I might point out that in reviewing American policy I have talked to many people over the years. This anti-bribery situation, the United States took a stand fairly early on at the end of the Carter administration.

BONDURANT: Yes, the Carter administration put forward legislation that became law to punish corrupt practices that occurred with respect to U.S. companies. I worked on that legislation as a Congressional staffer in the Senate. It was in my area of review as a legislative assistant, and I worked very hard on that.

Q: But the American diplomats talking about how the other countries scoffed at us and thought we were acting 'holier than thou' and of course this is never going to work. This is true of human rights. These were things that the United States played a very strong role in.

BONDURANT: In fact, after the passage of our anti-corruption laws during the Carter Administration, the situation had become anti-competitive for our companies, because we had anti-corruption laws for U.S. companies alone. U.S. companies complained that they wouldn't bribe, but other companies based in other countries would, and others would win the contracts. Furthermore, bribery creates economic distortion in the marketplace, and results in higher prices for the ultimate consumer.

Q: That is true.

BONDURANT: It was very important for U.S. business and for us at the OECD to level the playing field by pushing through the Anti-Bribery Convention. I am very proud of the fact that, during the time I was there, we worked so hard to insure that that OECD Anti-Bribery Convention was effectively put in place, and a great deal of progress was made on its administration and enforcement in other countries.

I also worked on an initiative to encourage nonmember countries. Ed Gabriel, the U.S. Ambassador to Morocco...

Q: Whom I have interviewed.

BONDURANT: Ed came to me and said, “Morocco would like to join your convention.” So I undertook an initiative with our State Department and our Justice Department to see if there was a way to encourage countries who were expressing interest in participating but who were not ready to be full members. I went to Morocco and met with every member of the cabinet in that government with Ambassador Gabriel to talk about corruption. We came back to Paris and we tabled a draft called the Anti-Corruption Declaration at the OECD, as a vehicle in which non-member countries could align themselves more closely with the OECD effort where appropriate, as a step towards accession to the OECD convention.

We wanted to encourage non-member governments, but at the same time make sure that they did not join just to attract investment without having in place the structures necessary to abide by the provisions of the convention. Many countries wanted to join the OECD as members and to be part of these various conventions and the various initiatives because investors from around the world saw membership in the OECD as the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Economic Approval” for investors. Joining such a convention would be a strong signal to investors that countries had good economic policies, good regulatory regimes, and good court systems.

Another initiative we undertook was to develop the benchmark corporate governance principles. This occurred before the Enron scandal. I worked very hard on this and made this one of my priorities.

Q: Enron being a scandal of a company that basically bilked its investors.

BONDURANT: Yes, and this was in 1998. We were responding to the Asian financial crisis. Now, looking back, it does not seem like such a crisis given the scale of regulatory failures that led to the current global credit crisis, but then it was. There was a growing recognition that good corporate governance is not just good for companies, but it is also good for countries. Countries wanted to attract investment in their corporations and in their countries, so we developed these benchmark corporate governance principles. They were non-binding, endorsed by the OECD ministers in 1999, and addressed key aspects of corporate governance and transparency and accountability. The principles were endorsed by the G7 finance ministers at the Cologne economic summit in 1999. This was an important step for the OECD World Bank program that followed.

In 2000, we updated the guidelines for multi-national enterprises. I was proud of this. Our updated guidelines covered standards not only on labor and the environment but also on bribery, consumer interests, and taxation. These guidelines of corporate responsibility are developed with input from member countries and non-member governments in business, labor, the non-governmental organizations, consumer organizations, and other public interest organizations. We examined the implications of electronic commerce in areas such as taxation, consumer fraud, privacy and security; and the impact of E-commerce on jobs, education and health. This e-commerce was a new thing. Nobody had looked at this before, so we were looking at it from the multi-national context. In December 1999, another priority was the e-commerce guideline: the multilateral consumer protection guidelines for electronic commerce, which tried to ensure the security and protection of online shopping. Those were the first international consumer protection guidelines.

Through the OECD, we also worked to try to prevent overlapping taxation on electronic commerce.

Q: Yes. While we are on the subject, was there a problem at this time in Europe with the government run post, telephone and telegraph PTT, which usually is a pretty poor deliverer of services? People in Italy had to wait months before they get a telephone. Things were changing with the mobile telephone and all that. Did you sense that governments were kind of slow to respond to what was happening in technology?

BONDURANT: When I was there, there was an enormous amount of interest in trying to respond. We didn't deal with those issues that you mentioned at the OECD. In the e-commerce area, we were dealing with the consumer protection guidelines, for example, or taxation. I think governments were trying to be progressive. They saw the U.S. economy booming and were trying to open markets to model after us.

Q: Yeah and of course you have countries, like Finland, that were leading the way electronics. OK go ahead with that.

BONDURANT: Regulatory reform had been something that I had worked on for many years in the Senate and something that I worked on at the OECD. We also had an OECD regulatory reform peer review exercise as a priority. We were successful in helping to persuade several reluctant G7 counterparts to come on board to have their own governments reviewed by the countries around the table and by experts. We estimated that regulatory reforms could raise the GDPs of Japan, France, and Germany by five percent over the next decade.

Q: My god.

BONDURANT: We worked very hard and used a lot of diplomacy to try to get them to agree to it. You ask why we care? We wanted them to be more efficient and effective

because in globalization a rising tide raises all ships. Clearly we are globally economically tied. Can there be any doubt about that?

Q: We are going through a very difficult time right now.

BONDURANT: We are living through the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression right now. By the time I left the OECD in March of 2001, twenty country regulatory reforms had been completed.

Another initiative that I undertook as a priority was governance outreach. In May of 1999, we created eight OECD global forums — trade, taxation, competition, governance, investment, sustainable development, the knowledge economy, and agriculture — to serve as OECD vehicles for outreach to non-member countries in areas of our strength. We offered to use our experts, if they were willing to receive us, to help them with their institutions to try and make their institutions more effective. The largest single country portion of OECD outreach was with Russia. We concentrated on preparing it to be a full participant in the international system.

Q: How effective did you feel it was?

BONDURANT: It was effective during the time I did it. We were working on strengthening tax administration and trying to help Russia strengthen its investment policies, competition policies, and corporate governance. At that time there were a number of reformers that were in key positions, and those people in the government came to the OECD and received the OECD. The support for such initiatives within the Russian government was probably confined to these reformers.

Q: Did you allow for observers? Did the Russians send someone in to sit in a back seat and watch how you operate?

BONDURANT: Yes, the Russians were at the OECD as I have mentioned. An initiative I undertook was to open our ministerial sessions to non-member countries. During my time at the OECD, we had every non-defense member of the U.S. cabinet come and meet with his or her counterpart at our ministerial sessions.

Q: This happened to be in Paris.

BONDURANT: Yes, in Paris. And with those sessions, we began to have outreach to important non-member countries like India and China. I really argued at our OECD council meetings for non-member country participants, who were very interested in participating.

Q: I was just thinking of how the French always seemed to have the reputation of being sort of contrarian on things. How did you find the French?

BONDURANT: The French ambassador, Joelle Bourgois, was one of my closest friends, and she was the only other woman on the Council of Ambassadors at one point. Joelle was excellent and brilliant. One ambassador once announced at the Council meeting that if one closed one's eyes, one would often think there were only women in the room debating because the French and American ambassadors debated in the forum of the OECD so often. If the U.S. said “black,” the French said “white.” Joelle admitted to me that the French government felt it was important for somebody to be the squeaky wheel because the U.S. was so very powerful. I didn't begrudge her that. I think I did get irritated about it occasionally, but I tried not to show it. Ultimately, we did work closely with France on a number of issues and I tried to find issues on which we could work together. We were involved together in two key activities with what was known as the Stability Pact. That was to try to help post-conflict Southeast Europe.

Q: We are really talking about the breakup of Yugoslavia.

BONDURANT: Yes. Within the context of the investment compact, the OECD focused on foreign direct investment policies, investment promotion strategies, support structures for

small and medium enterprises, privatization, physical reform, taxes, competition law and accounting practices. We shared responsibility with the council of Europe in implementing the stability pact anti-corruption initiative. So from time to time, the OECD undertook those kinds of things.

Q: How about the Kyoto accords and all that? Did that fall in your province?

BONDURANT: We did work on environmental issues. There was an Environmental Committee. Our representative was the EPA, and they had environmental representative level Ministerial at the OECD. I undertook the review of the environmental side of the house at the OECD in the context of the overall OECD internal regulatory form. We worked very hard on the environmental area. The OECD performed analytical work supportive of the view that emissions trading is the most efficient method to reduce greenhouse gasses. In response to your question about Kyoto Protocol, the OECD countries did some of the background work, some of the pre-Kyoto work there, trying to achieve consensus on different initiatives.

Q: You might explain emissions trading.

BONDURANT: Emissions trading is the idea that companies gain credits in a national scheme by not having pollution emissions. They can use these to offset pollution in which they may later cause, and they can trade these credits with other companies in a national network.

Q: The idea I guess in essence is to bring in all emissions down by averaging out.

BONDURANT: Yes, thank you. That is more succinctly stated. That is the goal. The OECD worked on the analytical side of that.

Also, the OECD actively supported the fight against money laundering and financial crime through our support of the financial action task force. We made considerable progress in

establishing a global anti-money laundering network, and persuading offshore financial centers to strengthen and prosecute financial crime. That became very important because right after I left office, the terrorist attacks of September 11 happened. The U.S. has relied on this network many times in the fight against global terrorism. I think that was a very important initiative led by our Treasury Department.

Q: The question was, were there any particular countries in the organization that were the burr under the saddle that caused all the ...

BONDURANT: Yes, there was often discrepancy because the organization worked by total consensus, meaning that if one country disagreed, it could stop an initiative from going forward. Small countries could cause discrepancy just as easily as a large country because they had just as much power to stop something. The OECD is the only forum that individually represented each country in the European Union. In the U.S.- EU relationship, Europe speaks with one voice, but in the OECD they speak with individual voices. That was both positive and negative. In the context you describe, it could be negative because there were more countries that could speak negatively.

For example, if there were issues between Greece and Turkey, where the Greeks and the Turks have a historic enmity over Cyprus, you could find that in discussion the Greeks or the Turks would object. I know there were objections to Cyprus' participating in an OECD Ministerial meeting. One might also see countries blocking something because of some other foreign policy issue. It happened time and time again. Historic problems in foreign policy would play out at the OECD.

Q: This is part of the business like the Greeks with Macedonia or the Spanish with the Basques or something of this nature.

BONDURANT: Yes, and the issue of the Middle East and Israel.

Q: Yeah or I would say the United States and Israel.

BONDURANT: Yes, and the U.S. and Israel.

Q: Is there anything we should cover? You obviously came away from that job feeling that you really had helped.

BONDURANT: Well, I think I did. I think I helped. I think that while I was there, the U.S. was an enormously powerful force trying to help the rest of the world, and trying to help itself in various processes that would make for better functioning, make for better policies, make for more efficient regulations, so I am very proud. But it was not front page news.

Q: You must have met many interesting people while you were ambassador. Tell me a little about the people you interacted with, their personalities, and how they may have influenced you.

BONDURANT: I remember very well when Larry Summers, then Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, chaired financial Working Party meetings at the OECD of a small group of G8 senior officials. Since the U.S. was chairing, I was allowed to attend those meetings, and I was very impressed by the people there, such as Jean-Claude Trichet, the Governor of the French Central Bank, and Merv King, the Deputy Governor of the British Central Bank. From the U.S., we had Timothy Geithner, Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Treasury Department. Janet Yellin, the very able head of the Clinton White House Council of Economic Advisors, attended other Working Party meetings with her G8 counterparts. These remarkable people were all destined to become even more important players on the global economic stage, but what really impressed me then was how well they worked together, in a collegial and mutually supportive way. It left a lasting impression on me, that our national economies have become truly interconnected and dependent on each other. The quality of these relationships allowed for a frank and constructive critique of the perceived missteps in each other's economic policies.

Toward the end of the Clinton administration, Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson came to the OECD as part of his crusade to convince member countries to lower oil prices. Oil prices were very high and U.S. consumers were really feeling the pinch. The Secretary asked me to put together a meeting of OECD ambassadors through our corollary energy group, which I did, at which he asked them to make his case to their own governments. This was not the usual role for the OECD, to convene simple to hear from a visiting cabinet meeting. But Secretary Richardson was creative in using his authority and this was an effective move.

Our Clinton cabinet secretaries often performed powerfully as chairmen of Ministerial level meetings. Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, was a very dynamic leader when the 29 ministers met to compare their health care systems, meetings for which the OECD staff had done extensive research. I recall one day, though, when some information I had given her was just a little too insensitive to be discussed in open meetings with the Europeans. She had asked me about the history of the Secretariat building in which the meetings were being held, and I had told her that it was an old Rothschild chateau that had been the Nazi naval headquarters during the War. When she announced in the group session that she had just learned this interesting historical fact, no one said a thing: you could have heard a pen drop. This incident taught me to always err on the side of caution when discussion matters of European history in an open meeting. It is hard for Americans to realize the lingering pain that many Europeans still feel.

One person I particularly liked and admired was Secretary Don Johnson from Canada, who was the first non-European OECD secretary general. He was a lawyer, and had been attorney general of Canada. Perhaps our legal backgrounds helped to facilitate our friendship. I felt that he was very helpful to the U.S. in the main. Before other countries had begun to determine their positions regarding his reelection, I decided to talk with my predecessors Al Larson, David Aaron and Stu Eizenstat, about the election. We

determined that the U.S. would support him for a second term and we proceeded with a successful strategy to recommend him to our mutual colleagues.

I was very fortunate to be part of the introductions of a number of our American leaders at different events in Paris, including for example, Ambassador Felix Rohatyn, First Lady Hillary Clinton, President Clinton, Secretary Albright, and Secretary Colin Powell. After Ambassador Rohatyn had left France, and before a new U.S. ambassador was named by the Bush administration, I was to introduce the new Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to the embassy staff, on his first official visit to France. It was such a fun introduction to make and the hundreds of staff members present responded with such fervor due to their high regard for him that it took Secretary Powell quite a while to quiet everyone down.

One event with President Clinton was especially memorable and gave me an insight into the perception others have of the OECD ambassadorial position. I was with the President at Ambassador Felix Rohatyn's residence with about 25 French CEOs. Felix was the U.S. ambassador to France. The President, in his usual fashion, had arrived late, and the group had been restless, but after his remarks, he seemed to charm all present. As he talked with each CEO individually, making his way through the room, I went into the next room to talk with White House staff who were traveling with him. One of them told me about a poll they had done on the plane ride over from Washington. The question was: What was the “best U.S. Ambassadorial position in the world?” All had voted, including the President, and the winning post, to my great surprise, was the OECD! They felt it was intellectually stimulating, as most of the important U.S. domestic policy issues were debated in an international context, but it didn't have the burden of the more mundane representational duties of a bilateral posting. And, not to be understated in importance to the outcome of the polthe OECD is located in Paris!

My husband and I visited with President Clinton in the Oval Office in the final days of his administration. I was surprised that he was so well informed about what was going on at the OECD as he thanked me for facing down a two-week French filibuster of genetically

modified foods. I had much of that time debating the OECD French ambassador, Joelle Bourgois, who was my very good friend outside the council chambers. The French were trying to prevent importation of these foods by arguing that they had not been proven safe. The U.S. position was that the French government was simply trying to protect its food industry from competition from American products. During the debate, French demonstrators dressed like giant chickens were outside the OECD secretariat, and they got a lot of press coverage.

Q: Let me ask a question I ask of people who were ambassadors during this period. From your point of view how did the whole horrible Monica Lewinski scandal affect your play out? It left a certain amount of derision. It allowed people to say well you know the Americans, the president has got feet of clay. I don't know if that is the right term, but how did it play out for you? Did you have a problem or was this source of a nuisance with your colleagues?

BONDURANT: I felt as an ambassador that when people would bring it up, and they often did, that it was incumbent on my part just not to comment, so I didn't. Some of my colleagues did either one way or the other, and I just didn't think that was right for me.

Q: Well it is not. You know it was a way of tweaking stuff, when we think we are fairly high and mighty.

BONDURANT: Some people tried to tweak it. I just refused to comment. That was a bit socially awkward. I would just say, “Look, it is on the front pages of all the papers every day. Everybody is reading about it. People can form their own judgments.” I was very committed to the policies of the administration and tried to work to keep my head down and asked my staff to keep their heads down and work and not focus on all of those issues. I had a staff meeting when it first began to ask them to keep their heads down, to keep working, to try to focus, just to move on because that is what we were there to do. I tried not to let it be a deterrent.

Q: Rightly so. What about when the Bush administration came in? Were there any signals that you were getting?

BONDURANT: I want to answer that, but before I do, I want to answer one other question about the press. I said that nothing we did was front page news, although I guess the anti-money laundering initiative was a front page story. I do recall being interviewed for the International Herald Tribune and there was a lot of coverage of that issue.

On the issue of the press generally, I shared the views of Ambassador Felix Rohatyn, the U.S. Ambassador to France when I was at the OECD. He was the person who was previously credited with resolving New York City's debt crisis in the 1970s. Felix was a pragmatic ambassador. In Paris, he and I met once a month, usually over lunch, to coordinate and discuss issues at our respective posts. One important thing that he and I felt needed strong attention was that the U.S. government and the Clinton administration were not focused enough on the importance of reaching out to the press to get our voice heard. The focus had been lost from the State Department's perspective, and their relationship with the U.S. press.

Q: Well public diplomacy is the...

BONDURANT: Yes, public diplomacy. My staff was skeptical on that issue. In fact the young, rising star who was the secretary of my delegation called me after I had left office to say, “You know, you were absolutely right about public diplomacy. We were skeptical, and in retrospect I am very embarrassed that we did not have more enthusiasm in working on public diplomacy with you.” At my post, we did make sure that we had articles in newspapers and magazines and that we made speeches and tried to speak to different affected audiences including other governments in ways that would promote U.S. supported policies.

We started a mission newsletter to help with our internal communication with U.S. government interested parties. I think we had more of a program than previously at the U.S. Mission. I was able to find funds to hire a U.S. professional to spearhead this initiative. As ambassador, I tried to try to make sure that the U.S. goals were being better understood within the organization. I think that we started a process there, which I hope continues. Enough said. I just wanted to mention that.

Q: No, no, that is a very important point. If you don't get the press on your side, you don't get the support from the government because the governments read the press.

BONDURANT: Exactly.

Q: All right what sort of signals or did you...

BONDURANT: You asked about the Bush administration.

Q: Yeah.

BONDURANT: There was a question after the election as to whether any Clinton appointed ambassadors would stay until summer. It was then determined that those of us with children in school, and those whose continuity of service would be especially helpful, would stay on. So I was asked to stay for a number of months into the Bush administration.

I took many Bush administration senior officials to their first international OECD Ministerial meeting, which was in fact the first international meeting for the new administration. We had the Bush Secretaries of the Environment, Energy, Commerce, Education, and the U.S. Trade Representative visiting the OECD at the same time. The delegation was led by Don Evans, Secretary of Commerce, who had been a business partner of President Bush.

The Bush administration was being widely criticized at that point over its failure to support the Kyoto Protocol and over statements that the president had made about Korea. As a former political appointee, it was very interesting for me to sit around the table in the peer review process that happens at the OECD. Countries were reprimanding me because of the new administration's steps. As a career ambassador, or as a career employee, that would have been common experience. They were used to that. Now, I had become like a foreign service officer. I found that we worked like a spinning top. I had never had the degree of loyalty, camaraderie and efficiency at my staff like I had at that point.

I had been an ambassador for a number of years and I had worked very hard to build a strong relationship with my staff. I hope that I was a good manager. I relied on my staff, and I thought they were excellent. I had a lot of respect for them. In a sense it was a culmination of that, and it was my last Ministerial, but I recall that we had never had so much criticism in the international press and at the Ministerial session, and never had we operated so effectively for our cabinet secretaries. So that was an interesting culmination. I recall that my staff asked me a lot of questions about how to deal with the new administration. In a way it was kind of rewarding for me, and it made me feel good that they felt that they could rely on me.

Can I tell you here about a very amusing incident that came out of that meeting, or rather, the dinner that concluded the sessions? The banquet was held at an excellent and fabulously decorated restaurant in the style of Louis XVI, called Pre Catelan, in the middle of the Bois de Boulogne. After dinner, everyone left the restaurant at the same time in a line of black limousines, driving very slowly back through the park. Secretary Evans was in my limo, along with me and my very French, very serious driver. Suddenly, we came upon one of the “ladies of the night” for whom the park is quite well known late at night. We inched by her and all three of us pretended not to notice. The Secretary and I continued to discuss what we had accomplished at the meetings. Perhaps two minutes later, we came upon a second prostitute, who was bare-chested. Again, we all pretended not to see her.

Two minutes further down the road, we encountered a third woman, completely nude. This time, our very serious driver burst out laughing, and then so did the Secretary and I. That was definitely the end of our serious discussion, and it led to me giving an explanation of the history of the Bois and this dodgy side of Paris nightlife!

Q: Well, I think one of the things that comes out of conversations we have had is how with an ambassador or somebody who is working for an ambassador there are certain things of OECD advancing the cause. It is a little bit like pushing the football closer to the goal line. You will never get to the goal line, but you are moving things ahead for the next person after you. You were there when there was some significant yardage gained on the organization that was dealing with very important issues.

BONDURANT: As I look back at some of the difficulties in relationships with OECD member nations experienced in the Bush administration, I find that the role of multilateral organizations is more important than I even realized when I was an ambassador. We have to have countries talking in every effective forum that we possibly can. We must be participants and we must be active and engaged. We need the support of other countries on most every international initiative that we undertake. I believe strongly that the OECD and its mission are vitally important.

Q: They really are. Briefly, what have you been up to since?

BONDURANT: Before I talk about that, let me just say how much the OECD experience meant to me and my family. Paris was the source of many happy memories. I was deeply honored to have been the first woman to deliver the Memorial Day speech a the American cemetery high above the Normandy beaches in a pouring rain. I will never forget climbing to the top of Notre Dame Cathedral with my 85-year-old father and my son to see the gargoyles up close. I loved representing the United States at the 1998 World Cup Soccer finals with my friend, and head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Carol Browner, and our sons. I was so proud to stand in for First Lady Hillary Clinton as keynote speaker

at a sumptuous performance and dinner with the first lady of France, Mrs. Chirac, at the Palace of Versailles. And what a thrill to witness the first occurrence of the “sparkling light effect” on the Eiffel Towewhich now occurs on the houduring the 2000 Millennium fireworks celebration, along with OECD Secretary General Don Johnson, my family and close friends.

After leaving the OECD, I did not go back to practicing law. Instead I joined my husband's financial and business advisory company, Bozman Partners. We also have done angel investing in small companies. I served on corporate boards, the largest and most well-known was Rolls Royce in England, the aerospace manufacturer, as an independent director. I did that for three years, and found it fascinating, but a little over a year ago I withdrew from all but non-profit boards in order to assist my ailing parents and to have more time to devote to my family.

Q: Obviously you were right at the end of a political campaign that seems to have started in the early Roman period or so.

BONDURANT: I know.

Q: But anyway it appears that a substantial Democratic majority in Congress and with a Democratic president, Barack Obama. How do you feel about that and do you have any aspirations or interests?

BONDURANT: I have been working on this campaign for quite a long time. I was an original Hillary Clinton supporter. Now I am strongly backing the Obama/Biden ticket and I do think they will be elected. I think it will be a very important election. I am tremendously impressed with both of the candidates. I know Joe Biden (D-DE) from my days in the Senate. I also worked with him and his staff as OECD Ambassador when he was the Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I think that the election will

be a positive thing. There will be really hard times. I am happy they will be elected, but I think that we are in for years of high unemployment.

Q: Yes it is going to be a very difficult time. But people say maybe it is time to straighten out the economy and get things a little better ordered.

BONDURANT: Well, all my life I have been in favor of efficient regulation, and I think that the Bush administration was too unwilling to enforce regulations. Certainly if you read the Washington Post today you will see comments about the fact that the administration was not strong enough in its regulation policies for some of the economic entities. I am sure there is blame to go around, but I do believe that regardless of the political party there will be an environment for making sure that we are doing the right kind of oversight. For example, it is essential to ensure that heavily speculative entities will be regulated in a way that they have not been in the past.

Q: Well Amy I want to thank you very much. This has been quite fascinating. I knew nothing about the OECD and also nothing about regulation and all this. I think this will be very good insight for our readers. Thank you.

BONDURANT: Thank you.

Q: Ok and this is an addendum to our interview with Amy Bondurant.

BONDURANT: I am reading the International Herald Tribune dated Wednesday October 15, yesterday. The headline reads: “U.S. Follows Lead of Europeans in Supporting Banks.” I think this is the first time, dating back to the time that I served as ambassador, that I can remember seeing such a significant case of the U.S. following the lead of the Europeans. It is the first headline I have seen like that because before it has been Europeans who follow the lead of the U.S. Here we find out that Brown...

Q: This is Gordon Brown, the prime minister of England.

BONDURANT: Gordon Brown, prime minister of England, came up with a rescue plan to attack what he thought was the root cause of the global squeeze by injecting money directly into banks in return for the government taking ownership shares. Paulson didn't want to do that in the U.S., but we followed their lead.

Q: Paulson is the Secretary of the Treasury.

BONDURANT: Henry Paulson is Secretary of the Treasury. In my experience as OECD ambassador, I was in many situations where we all sat around the table and I noted that whenever the U.S. ambassador spoke or the U.S. minister at a table of ministers spoke, other countries around the table lined up for or against that position. In other words, we were the touchstone. Countries would wait for us to speak, and then they would then determine what their position was going to be. We have been such strong leaders. I now see this enormous economic tumult we face, and in this time of crisis, I see where we are following the lead of Europeans. I think that is significant.

Q: It is, and also in this time I have noticed two things. One is Spain and the other is Canada where they have much stronger regulations on their banking practices, they seem to be weathering the storm better.

BONDURANT: Interesting observation.

Q: Yeah you know, I mean regulation is a good thing if it is not overdone. I think the EU has gotten a little too heavy on the size of cucumbers and things like this, but still.

BONDURANT: Well, the EU has a problem getting its members to cooperate and they have to make so many concessions that might be inefficient economically, as a result of trying to bring all their members on board. Somehow, we seem to do it better in the United States.

Q: Ok, thank you again.

End of interview